

**From People's Theatre to People's Eucharist:
Resources from Popular Theatre for Eucharistic Reform
in the Church of South India, Kerala State**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes a methodology for invigorating the celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of South India in Kerala State, India. The proposed scheme uses dramatic and didactic resources from the People's Theatre. The aim is to develop a "People's Eucharist" that will bring the laity of the church into the centre of liturgical action.

The first chapter discusses the meaning of the Eucharist and the role of the liturgy in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not only the church's commemoration of the Last Supper and the passion of Christ; it is also its celebration of God's victory in Jesus Christ. It is a means of reconciliation, transformation, communion and renewal through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is argued here that a good liturgy will facilitate the active participation of the whole congregation in the eucharistic celebration. It will enable the worshippers to experience the liberating and transforming presence of Christ in their midst. The worshippers will find their own stories enmeshed in the story of God's salvation. They will encounter the vision and the challenge of the Kingdom of God. It is also argued that the inculturation of the liturgy is absolutely essential if the church's worship is to be relevant and meaningful to insiders and outsiders.

The second chapter, which is in three parts, contains an evaluation of the liturgical life of the Church of South India. In the first part it is argued that the liturgies of the CSI, namely, *The Order of the Lord's Supper* (1950/'79) and its two alternate forms, are inadequate to meet the needs of the growing church to day. The church needs a liturgy that has close affinities to the life, struggles, and the mission of the people of God, and which reflects the best of India's spirituality and culture. The second part of the chapter contains the findings of a field survey conducted in the four Kerala CSI dioceses to discover people's experience of the Eucharist. On their basis, it is contended that the liturgical worship in these dioceses fails to provoke people to transcend the boundaries of their private religious experiences and to take up the concerns of the Kingdom of God in the context of the church's social tasks. The third part suggests certain guiding principles for liturgical renewal.

Chapter Three deals with the phenomenon of the People's Theatre as a fund of resources for liturgical renewal. It is argued that since drama is not alien to the Bible or the Christian tradition, and since dramatic symbolism had a definite place in Jesus' communication, the use of theatre in the church's worship can be justified. People's Theatre is a political and educational theatre in the Third World. It is popular in India, and has been successfully employed in Kerala as a tool for social change. It has a strong conceptual background derived from Brecht, Freire, Boal, and others. In this chapter the strengths and weaknesses of People's Theatre are critically examined and its resources for liturgical renewal are identified.

Chapter Four introduces the concept and method of the proposed "People's Eucharist" that takes its cue from the People's Theatre. With the judicious use of storytelling and dramatisation, it involves the whole church, and not just the clergy, in all stages of the planning and celebration of the Eucharist. It juxtaposes the stories of the people, their experiences, and perceptions with the story of God's salvation so that they (both people and their stories) may be transformed in the emerging vision of the Kingdom of God. There is a stress on the need to apply the liberating experience of the Eucharist to the Christian vocation to be God's servants and witnesses in a suffering world.

Chapter Five shows, with the aid of model liturgies, how the local congregation can develop and make use of the People's Eucharist. The chapter also deals with the finer points of incorporating the People's Eucharist in the present pattern of worship in the CSI, Kerala and of enabling the dioceses and the local congregations in that process to bring a new orientation to their worship and mission.

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and constitutes the results of my research in the subject.

Kuruvilla George

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To
the revered memories of
K. George and Saramma George
M. N. Chacko and Sosamma Chacko
our dear parents
who, by their fine Christian example
and courageous witness,
have lit up our paths

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INTRODUCTION

The play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

-- Hamlet 2.2

It is eight o'clock on Sunday morning. In a typical Church of South India parish in Kerala, the church bell tolls and groups of people of all ages, men, women and children, stream to the church. Everyone carries a Bible, hymnbook and prayer book. At eight-thirty, when the bell tolls again, the worship begins. The worshippers whole-heartedly join in; they sing, say the responses, listen to the lessons and the sermon, confess their faith, make their offertory, and solemnly take part in the Communion. The worship is led by the presbyter on whose words and movements every one's attention is focused. Members of the parish committee faithfully carry out their responsibilities. They welcome newcomers, carry the Bible in the processions, read the Lessons, bring in the offertory and the communion elements, and gladly render whatever assistance the presbyter requires of them. As in many other churches, the choir leads in the singing and in the chanting of prayers. After the worship, people stop for a while to chat in small groups.

All over Kerala, churches fill to capacity with expectant believers on Sundays and on other days of worship; notwithstanding such enthusiasm on the part of the laity, the church's worship is found wanting in many respects. For a good percentage of the church members, worship is the be-all and end-all of Christian life. Many of them with a great deal of success manage to keep their religious life and their temporal occupations far apart. They wear secular goggles to look at the problems of poverty, sickness, unemployment, communal conflicts, war and other issues in the world in which they live. The contradictions in the church's life do not disconcert them. They do not fret about the disunity and denominationalism within the Christian community that weaken the church's mission and witness. They do not spend sleepless nights worrying about the injustice and discrimination meted out against the Dalits in the church; the fact that the Dalits and non-Dalits do not worship together in many of their churches does not prick their consciences. They are very religious, but their religion seems to be trapped within the liturgy, within the rituals, and the

four walls of the church. Consequently one observes several widening gaps in the life of the church: gaps between worship and daily life, between the sacred and the secular, between precept and practice, between the clergy and the laity, and between the church and its non-Christian neighbours.

But if anyone asked a regular churchgoer, "Is there anything wrong with the church's worship?" he or she would be surprised at such a question and would surely answer in the negative. There are of course some who feel uneasy about the problems and really want change. But a large majority of the church members are satisfied with the status quo; in fact many of them, not being aware of other possibilities, might frown upon liturgical reforms. The present liturgy,¹ that has not undergone much change in half a century of its existence, has almost become a mark of the church's identity -- so much so that for many to change the liturgy is tantamount to changing or even subverting the church!

What is wrong with the CSI liturgy?

It must be admitted that the Church of South India has a well-made eucharistic liturgy which has caught the attention of liturgical reformers even in other parts of the world. The eucharistic order of worship that is used in most of the congregations is the *Order of the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist*² which came into existence in 1950 [Its revised form³ and an alternate version⁴ appeared later. But they have not been able to replace it for reasons to be discussed in Chapter Two]. It is the liturgy of a united church which has brought together the liturgical traditions of the constituent churches. It has also imbibed the best insights of the liturgical movement. But now it is time to think of an alternate pattern of worship.

For the present, suffice it to say that the liturgy of the CSI [this includes the liturgy of 1950 and its two variants] fails to bring the totality of Christian faith to bear on the life of the worshippers. Conversely, it falls short of mirroring the totality of the life and concerns of the people. In fact it tends to restrict the sway of religion to certain areas of life, leaving a large portion of it to its own devices. Christian faith is reduced to a few neat, terse and coldly liturgical expressions and theological jargons. It limits salvation to its 'spiritual'

¹ *An Order of the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist*. See The CSI, *The Book of Common Worship* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1983) 5-20.

² *Ibid.*

³ "The Revised Version:" CSI, *The Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist* (Madras: C.L.S., 1972).

⁴ CSI, *The CSI Liturgy: The Holy Eucharist – An Alternate Version* (Madras, C.L.S., 1985).

dimensions at the expense of its ethical and missiological aspects. It is a “token” liturgy that pays but lip service to the great concerns of Christianity, like justice, peace and reconciliation. Such liturgical restrictiveness confines Christianity to the church and its Sunday worship. It stands in marked contradiction to Jesus’ holistic outlook on human life, his message of the Kingdom of God, and his “worldly” engagement with human needs, problems and concerns. A token liturgy breeds a token Christianity and a sterile Christian culture. Practically, at worship on Sunday mornings, the worshipper steps into an artificial world where she is compelled to forget her real world and situation and to think of and to say things which have little meaning for her secular existence. The sermon, prayers, and the announcements show that the worship is very much church-centred (institution-centred), rather than people-centred. The fifty-year old liturgy does not reflect the challenges, anxieties and prayers of the new era of Indian life. One must admit that this state of affairs is by no means peculiar to the CSI. But much is expected of the CSI which once pioneered the movement for church unity in India. Today the CSI has the challenging task of initiating a liturgical movement that will exemplify the real significance of worship as a means of lifting up the whole of life and human experience to God for liberation, transformation and sanctification.

Therefore it is imperative for the CSI to think of a scheme to enrich the liturgy so that it will encompass the various dimensions and vicissitudes of human life. The liturgy needs to become comprehensive enough to incorporate common people, their concerns and their mission in its scheme. This may be done without imperilling the church’s precious liturgical tradition and heritage.

Tackling the problems at issue

The chief concern of the present research in Practical Theology, therefore, is to develop a methodology for bringing renewal to the eucharistic worship in the Kerala dioceses of the Church of South India with the help of the artistic, pedagogical, and organisational resources available from the People’s Theatre. The purpose is to enable the worshipping community to unravel the totality of its life to God for healing and transformation, to encourage more active and creative participation of the congregation in worship, and to reorient the church to take up its mission more seriously. It is hoped that such change will help the worshipping community to interact more freely and creatively with its social, religious and cultural environment.

Liturgy refers to the whole gamut of the church's worship but this research will focus on the central act of the church's worship, namely the eucharistic liturgy or "the Order of the Lord's Supper." Again, the study will concentrate on the CSI in Kerala, on account of the social and cultural distinctiveness of the Kerala church. In fact, the church's life in the four south Indian states is so versatile that sweeping generalisations about the church in south India are almost impossible, which is an aspect that the liturgists have often overlooked in the past.

Why liturgy and liturgical renewal are of crucial importance

The liturgy is a creedal statement; it is a repository of the church's faith. The church is always faced with the theological task to rediscover anew the origins of its faith and to reinterpret them in terms of the challenges of the present day. This task is partly fulfilled in the process of liturgical renewal. A living liturgy serves to bridge the gap between the church's doctrinal tradition and the real-life experiences of common people by encouraging dialogue and mutual enrichment. It brings doctrine to the level of the ordinary people. A living liturgy also articulates the faith expressions of the people; in that sense it is grassroots theology. Such a liturgy is sensitive to the struggles, problems and aspirations of the people and draws deeply from their life and experience to fashion a theological framework for the church's life and mission. One may say that theology is the mind and liturgy is the heart of the church. Both the incandescence of theological reflection and the gentle glow of liturgical life need to be ever kept aflame and in constant interaction with one another, as both of them are essential constituents in the church's missionary existence. The theologian cannot afford to function without gazing on God and without paying attention to the people and the world around. Similarly, detached from the real-life struggles and concerns of the people, the church's liturgical life will suffocate to death. Unmindful of the serious theological concerns of the day, it will stagnate lacking zest and dynamism. In fact, liturgies, that fall out of step with social changes and fail to undergo constant renewal, are liable to endanger the very life and mission of the church with the dead weight of their absurd traditions. Therefore liturgical renewal needs to be one of the main concerns of the church. The present study hopes to anchor the church's liturgy in the social matrix with the help of a secular instrument of communication, namely, People's Theatre which is a political, developmental and educational theatre.

The church's liturgy and the theatre

Today in Kerala, diffusion of new ideas, and revolutionary changes in socio-economic, cultural and religious structures and relationships are being realised through a variety of

popular and democratic means employed by the government and by political and cultural agencies. These media are enlightening people as to their social responsibilities and helping them to feel their solidarity with the suffering millions all over the world. In this area different types of theatre, and pre-eminently the new People's Theatre, have played a significant role. The Kerala church has to open its eyes to discover the significance and potentials of the theatre⁵ for enlivening its life and worship.

The new People's Theatre -- also known as popular theatre and theatre for development -- is to be distinguished from the traditional popular theatre or folk theatre which is centuries old. People's Theatre exhibits a marked difference with all varieties of folk theatre, ritual or liturgical drama, and the ceremonies, pageants, carnivals and festivals that go with them. It is also to be differentiated from various kinds of theatre that are geared to entertain the masses, like the melodramatic theatre, as well as from the soap operas and slick comedies that appear on the stage or on the TV. People's Theatre, on the contrary, evolves from the "stories" or the real-life experiences of the people. Its resources are their experiences, their imagination, their talents and their abilities. It is a local, democratic, participatory medium that empowers the common people to combat and subvert unjust socio-economic structures, and helps them to rehearse revolutions and to envisage ideal social conditions. People's Theatre, which is an active and influential movement in India and particularly in Kerala state, provides an impressive array of resources for liturgical renewal and for developing a "People's Eucharist."

What is "People's Eucharist"?

It is necessary at this juncture to explain what the term "People's Eucharist" means. The Eucharist is the church's act of thanksgiving for divine salvation. God in Christ has reconciled the world to himself; God makes reconciliation available to one and all through the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is a ritual acknowledgement of that salvation and a personal response to it. It is a symbolic means of receiving God's saving and renewing grace, apart from which Christian life is inconceivable. It calls for a personal response of repentance, faith, and obedience to God. It also demands justice, peace and reconciliation in one's personal relationships within the human community.

⁵ 'Theatre' and 'drama': Keir Elam defines theatre as "the complex of phenomena associated with the performer audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it." Drama is "that mode of fiction designated for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions." Elam, however, admits that this distinction is made only to serve purposes of analysis, and not intended to be absolute. See *The Semiotics of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1987) 2.

The attributive “people’s” indicates that the aspect of people’s participation is given special emphasis in this particular format of the eucharistic liturgy. People’s Eucharist is Eucharist for all. It has to be distinguished from the “church’s Eucharist,” if there is one. It is a form of the Eucharist that may be celebrated even outside the four walls of the church challenging outsiders to become insiders. People’s Eucharist encourages and facilitates maximum participation and involvement of the worshippers, of both clergy and laity, in the liturgical action. It assists them to praise God and to respond actively to God’s great gift of salvation by bringing to God the stories of their lives so that God may touch, heal, and give them new meaning and purpose. Such participation in the Eucharist will engender more openness within the worshipping community and generate more meaningful and equitable mutual relationships in the wider society.

The term “people’s” also denotes its affinity to the People’s Theatre from which its organisational methodology is derived. Therefore this format of the People’s Eucharist evinces a strong option for the poor and the oppressed and an active resistance of evil and injustice. The liturgy focuses on Christ’s message of the Kingdom of God. It stresses the liberation and transformation of individuals and communities and the ethical witness of the church. The liturgical action is viewed as a learning experience: learning of God’s work of salvation, learning of the suffering of others, and learning to serve and to bear witness. People’s Eucharist is basically narrative in style and it will make much use of local ways of storytelling, arts and crafts paving the way for greater inculturation of the church and its better integration with the cultural milieu.

An outline of the thesis

The argument of this dissertation will be developed in five chapters. Chapter One will be a discussion of the meaning and the ideal function of the Eucharist in the life of the church. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the conceptual and theological framework that underlies this project for liturgical renewal. The Eucharist is a gift of God; on the other hand, it is a joint action in which God, God’s people, and the whole company of heaven participate. The whole church is involved in its celebration, both the clergy and the laity exercising an equally active role. The Eucharist is fellowship in the body and blood of Christ; it is participation in the sacrificial death and the victorious resurrection of the Son of God; it also involves participation in his mission in the world. At the Eucharist, the Spirit transforms the worshipping community into the Body of Christ. This chapter will also deal with the dramatic and pedagogic qualities of the Eucharist.

Chapter Two will deal with the present liturgies of the CSI and the liturgical life of the CSI in the four Kerala dioceses, and show why liturgical renewal is an imperative for the church. This chapter will present the findings of a field study conducted in select parishes in the CSI, Kerala, to discover the extent to which the CSI liturgy has been helpful in the church's life and mission. It will be argued that the CSI stands in need of a liturgical format, which will mobilise the laity, foster the church's ongoing dialogue with India's culture, confront and eradicate evil social practices and prejudices, and encourage and empower the worshipping communities for their mission in the wider society.

Chapter Three will introduce the People's Theatre as a fund of resources for the rejuvenation of the church's liturgical life. The chapter will be prefaced by an overview of the history of the affinity between drama and the worship of the church. The chapter will then go on to focus on the People's Theatre, which is a means of grassroots communication for social change in the Third World. Special attention will be paid to the influence of People's Theatre in India and particularly in Kerala. The theoretical basis of People's Theatre will be traced to the contributions of Bertolt Brecht, Paulo Freire, and Augusto Boal. The chapter will indicate the resources from the People's Theatre that could be employed for liturgical renewal in the CSI.

Chapter Four will introduce the concept and the method of the proposed "People's Eucharist," which is basically an elaboration of the liturgy with the active involvement of lay persons in the planning and the celebration of the liturgy. People's Eucharist is a storytelling liturgy that interweaves God's salvation story with the stories of the people. It will show how the dramatic aspect can be brought back to the liturgy when ordinary people use their talents to share their insights and experiences. It will be indicated how the liturgy can become a stronger didactic tool to promote the self-instruction of the people of God in the ways of God's Kingdom.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, deals with the actual shape and practice of the People's Eucharist. The primary purpose of People's Eucharist is to enable active participation and involvement of the whole church in the liturgical action. People's Eucharist enables the participants to bring to God the totality of their lives. It also enables them to respond actively and creatively to God's saving, liberative and transforming activity in Christ and through his Spirit. Two model liturgies included in the chapter [and a third in Appendix D] will throw light on the various applications of People's Eucharist. A short conclusion will

sum up the argument and suggest the possibilities of People's Eucharist while indicating the limitations of the present research.

Personal interest in the area of research

The research is motivated by a personal concern and conviction. The personal concern is of a pastoral nature. It is born from the researcher's several years of personal contact and involvement in the life of CSI congregations in Kerala and in other states in the capacities of a presbyter of the Church of South India, an erstwhile missionary, as well as a theological teacher. He had also a stint as the convenor of the CSI Malayalam area liturgy committee. The researcher has been often encouraged and enthralled by the zeal and earnestness of local congregations in Kerala. He has also been encouraged by the joy of participating in creative worship services where everyone in the congregation was actively involved in the liturgical action. Of such experiences special mention must be made of several non-denominational worship sessions at the Central Prison in Kerala's capital. Alternatively he has been baffled and disappointed by the barrenness of the worship in many congregations where large numbers have become unthinking slaves of the restrictive influence of the CSI liturgy. These exposures and experiences have motivated a genuine search for a liturgical format that will involve the whole congregation and enable its members to respond with their whole being to the saving, liberating and transforming power of God.

The researcher is deeply convinced about the scope and possibilities of theatre. His personal involvement with stage-, chancel- and street-theatre as an amateur producer/director of a relatively small people's theatre group, *Aikyavedi*,⁶ over a number of years has instilled in him a great faith in the possibilities of theatre. He has seen with his own eyes how involvement in theatre could transform individuals and groups. He is a personal witness to the charm that theatre holds for audiences across Kerala. Theatre can befriend hostile audiences, generate joy and goodwill, clarify issues, convince and persuade the recalcitrant and the pugnacious. It has universal appeal among the young and the old, and among people of different social groups and regions. Theatre can work wonders with its players too transforming introverted and shy individuals overnight into amiable, outgoing people. People's Theatre brings out the hidden talents in people. In many cases, nobody is more surprised than the actor herself at her new found talent to entertain and to put ideas across. The researcher has worked with artistes hailing from a wide spectrum of social, cultural and

⁶ See Kuruvilla George, "Aikya Communications, South India," in *Voices at the Watering Places*, ed. Kathleen D. Nicholls (New Delhi: TRACI, 1991) 127-129.

linguistic backgrounds and has seen them being amalgamated into close-knit groups as they supported one another in their effort to entertain people. He has seen healthy attitudes developing among these people. These experiences have convinced the researcher of the great resources that theatre holds for enlivening worship and for the transformation of whole communities. He has great faith in the value of the People's Theatre as an effective tool for group organisation and social change that can be adapted into an appropriate means of enlivening the liturgy.

The Eucharist is God's gift to his church. The whole church must open itself up in order to receive that gift and to experience the communion with God and reconciliation with fellow-beings that God offers in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit. The church's liturgy has a significant role in enlightening and equipping the people of God to be a servant community, through which God's renewing, liberating, transforming love may flow into all the world to soothe every wound, heal every broken heart and calm every strife.

Chapter One

The Eucharist: The Church Responds to God's Salvation

When we leave Mass we ought to go out the way Moses descended Mount Sinai, with his face shining, with his heart brave and strong, to face the world's difficulties.

--Oscar Romero (1979)¹

1.1. Introduction

God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ becomes operative in human lives through the work of the Holy Spirit; the Eucharist is the church's response of praise and thanksgiving to that gift. The church blooms into its full life and maturity at the Eucharist, for it is when human hearts are full of thanks and praise that they become truly receptive to the saving grace of God. The eucharistic experience renews and transforms the church, which discovers itself during that hour of worship.² The Eucharist defines the church's calling, nature and mission. Continually renewed and transformed in the Eucharist, the church becomes a sign or a sacrament that draws the whole world into the sphere of God's saving work. Therefore (to paraphrase Henri de Lubac), the Eucharist makes the church as much as the church makes the Eucharist.³ The eucharistic action must then involve the whole church as it responds to the salvation that God offers in Jesus Christ. To this end, the church needs liturgies that will ensure and encourage the participation of every member of the church -- the clergy and laity,

¹ See Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*, compiled and translated by James R. Brockman (Farmington, PA: The Plough, 1998) 139.

² Cf. In 1 Cor. 11:29, Apostle Paul chides the Corinthian church for failing to "discern the body" at the Lord's Supper; by the word, "body" he means pre-eminently the body of believers which is part and parcel of the Body of Christ. At the Eucharist one must open one's eyes to see one's brothers and sisters in Christ and one's heart to love and care for them. See also footnote 133.

³ Henri de Lubac, the Catholic theologian said, "... The Church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also produces the Church. In the first instance the Church is involved in her active part ... in the exercise of her sanctifying power; in the second case she is involved in her passive aspect, as the Church of the sanctified." See Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956) 92. See also Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993) 79. In the words of Cantalamessa, "the Eucharist makes the Church by making the church Eucharist!" See *The Eucharist: Our Sanctification* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993) 21, cited by William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (London: Blackwell, 1998) 232.

men, women, and children -- in the liturgical action and thereby reinforce the mission and witness of the church.

The ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*,⁴ often referred to as the “Lima text,” points out that the church “receives the Eucharist as a gift from God” (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 23-25).⁵ The document states that the Eucharist is the “central act of Christian worship,”⁶ which expresses the church’s faith in the God of salvation, symbolises its constant devotion to his service, and fosters its mission in a troubled world. It is a means of communion with God in Christ, who forgives sin and promises eternal life.⁷ It is “the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁸ It makes available to human beings the benefits of Christ’s work as mediator. “The Eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ who ever lives to make intercession” on behalf of humanity.⁹ The Eucharist is a means of identifying with Christ and his ministry in the world. “In the Eucharist, Christ empowers human beings to live with him, and to suffer with him....”¹⁰ “In Christ worshippers offer themselves as a living and holy sacrifice” (cf. Rom. 12:1).¹¹ It is a means of experiencing the continued presence of Christ in the world. “The church confesses Christ’s real, living and active presence in the Eucharist.”¹² “The eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence.”¹³

⁴ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 11 (Geneva: WCC, 1982), or the “Lima text.” This is a study document prepared by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches to recognise and emphasise areas of theological agreement among its member churches on the key issues of baptism, Eucharist, and ministry. The original draft was the outcome of fifty years of joint study and reflection, beginning from the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission at Lausanne in 1927. The draft statement was sent to all the member churches for their response. Among some three hundred member churches, a hundred send in their comments. The Commission revised the original draft after several meetings. The final document was ready in 1982. It is known as the ‘BEM document’ or the ‘Lima text’ of 1982. This was again returned to the churches for their feedback. At this stage the Commission was confident that the Lima text represented “the significant theological convergence which Faith and Order has discerned and formulated.” (See *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, ix).

⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section 1 (The numbers given henceforth when mentioning this document are not page numbers but section numbers in the second part of the book, viz: “Eucharist”).

⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, sec. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, sec. 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, sec. 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

The Eucharist is God's gift to his church not only to remember but also to experience the living presence of Christ in the Spirit-filled community of the faithful and in God's world. The liturgy is for the church a sign of God's gracious act of salvation and liberation in Christ; the church in turn is a sign for the world. When the whole church joins in the liturgical action, listens to God's voice, and brings to God the whole of its life and struggles, there is healing, reconciliation, salvation and a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

1.1.1. The "Eucharist" and the "liturgy"

The Eucharist or the Lord's Supper is the church's free response to God's gift of free salvation. It is a commemoration of the Last Supper of Christ with his disciples. The disciples had participated in many a joyful meal of fellowship with Christ in the past. But on that fateful night Christ shared with them the mystery of his forthcoming death, which was the mystery of God's saving activity. He told them during the ritual meal that his death would be a sacrifice that would bring into being a new covenant or a renewed relationship between God and human beings. Christ invited his disciples to partake in that covenant by sharing his cup of suffering. He shared the bread and wine with his disciples. He wanted them to repeat the symbolic sharing of bread and wine to keep his life and mission in their constant memory. Christ looked forward to the feast of joy at the consummation of the Kingdom of God of which this symbolic meal was but a foretaste. The church's celebration of the Eucharist therefore looks back in thanksgiving to the Last Supper and to the whole Christ-event; it also looks forward in hope to the future consummation of God's Kingdom.

The Eucharist is also related to the meals that Christ shared with his disciples after his resurrection. During those meals, the risen Lord strove to reassure them, to deepen their communion with him and to remove their misconceptions and apprehensions. The purpose of Christ's meals with his disciples had always been to bring transformation in their lives; he desired that they might follow his example, and with faith and hope engage in the mission of God to which he had called them.

For the church, the Eucharist is a sacrament and a channel of divine grace. It is a sign of God's faithfulness and saving love towards his creation. As a form of worship it is a gift of the triune God to his church and a meeting point between God and God's people. It is a means of communion with God and fellowship with one's brothers and sisters in the world.

The word 'liturgy' refers to the act of worship.¹⁴ Specifically, the liturgy consists of the structure, language and system of symbols that give shape to the Eucharist. It is the physical component of the sacrament. Liturgy is the form, and Eucharist the content. Liturgy is a ritual statement of the church's faith. It is a summary of the gospel of salvation. It is the conscience of the Church, its active and sensitive heart that responds to the call of God and the challenges of the world. The liturgy is a means of the church's self-expression, which should not be obfuscated by restrictive tradition or rigid ritualisation. It is an expedient and creative means for the church to encounter its saving God in the Eucharist and to bear witness to his goodness in the free and affable environment of the church's fellowship. The liturgy should be constantly adapted to answer to the needs of the church and to respond to its social and cultural environment. It should facilitate the wholehearted celebration of the Eucharist by the whole congregation, not dominated or hijacked by any particular group, like the clergy or the choir.

1.1.2. The role of the liturgy in worship

Liturgy is a means of offering to God the totality of human life and experience, of laying bare before God's majesty all the dimensions of life, living conditions, and environment so that God may see them and redeem them through Christ and through his Spirit (cf. Ps. 139:23-24). Worship and liturgical action are related to openness and truthfulness (Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Jn. 1:5-10). Worship involves the opening of one's eyes (Ps. 119:18), lips (Ps. 51:15), mind (Lk. 24:45), and heart (Acts 16:14). Liturgy creates an atmosphere in which it is possible to experience God's love and to listen to God's word (cf. Ps. 27:4; 84). True worship sharpens one's ears to listen to the cries of the oppressed as well. The Psalmists are as much open to the voice of God as to the cries of the poor (Cf. Ps. 9:12; 10:12; 74:19, *et passim*). Worship inspires a love towards God that engages one's whole being and instils a concern for one's fellow-beings that overrules one's natural selfishness (Mk. 12:29-31). Worship involves turning to God in repentance and faith so that one is able to see oneself, one's neighbours, and environment from God's point of view (cf. Isa. 6). It involves the

¹⁴ Defining 'liturgy,' Dom Gregory Dix says,

'The Liturgy' is the term which covers generally all that worship which is organised by the church, and which is open to and offered by, or in the name of, all who are members of the church. It distinguishes this from the personal prayers of the individual Christians who make up the church, and even from the common prayer of selected or voluntary groups within the church, e.g. guilds or societies.

Dix adds that in the course of history the term liturgy has come to mean specifically "the heart and core of Christian worship and Christian living – the Eucharist or Breaking of Bread." See Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, second edition (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1946) 1.

surrender of one's self to do God's will (Rom. 12:1-2). All these become possible through the activity of the Holy Spirit who is the Supreme Enabler of worship (1 Cor. 2:10-16; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 5:18-20; 6:18, *et passim*; cf. Jn. 4:23-24).

According to *The Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy*, the seminal document on liturgy and liturgical renewal from the Second Vatican Council, liturgy is "the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."¹⁵ Liturgy is a dialogic communication between God and his church that encourages both listening and responding.¹⁶ The *Constitution* says, "... In the liturgy God speaks to his people and Christ is still proclaiming his gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and by prayer."¹⁷ In worship the people of God experience the reality of the presence Christ who becomes their 'eternal contemporary.'

Reflecting in the same strain, the authors of *Encounter with God* elucidate the role of the liturgy as the means of dialogue and communion between God and the people of God. They state:

The liturgy in its totality is both the act of God and the act of the Church. It is therefore fundamentally a dialogue, a divine word and a human answer, a wonderful exchange of gifts whereby God gives to us himself and his divine life and we, empowered by him, give to him every fibre of our bodies and every moment of our existence."¹⁸

Such a dialogue demands the total dedication of time, attention, talents and resources to God so that God's strength, power and victory may become available in human lives.

¹⁵ *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (henceforth, the *Constitution*), article 2, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, trans. J. Gallagher (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965; reprint, 1967) 136. The *Constitution* defines liturgy as a joint activity of Christ and the Church, which is his body. It states that liturgy is:

an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which is proper to each of these signs; in the liturgy full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members. See *Constitution*, article 7, *ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶ Paul Puthanangady says, "The prayer and the life of the Christian community is presided over by the Spirit of God. It is gathered together in prayer and witness to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian worship is not the product of the human spirit; it is something that comes from God. What the Christian is asked to do is only to respond to the action of God." See *Invitation to Christian Worship*, 2d ed. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1979) 33.

¹⁷ *The Constitution*, article 33. See *op. cit.*, 149.

¹⁸ D.B. Forrester, J.I.H. Macdonald, and Gian Tellini, *Encounter with God: an Introduction to Christian Worship and Practice*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996) 47.

According to the Bible, worship of God is primarily a heavenly activity (Isa. 6:1-5; Rev. 5:6-14; 7:9-12).¹⁹ Earthly worship is but an echo of the ceaseless celestial music that reminds the world of God, its creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. Cavanaugh calls attention to the vision of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews who characterises Jesus as the heavenly High Priest. The completed work of Christ conjoins the earth and the heaven, time and eternity in the worship of the living God (cf. Heb. 4:14-16). Cavanaugh says, "In the Eucharist the heavens are opened and the church of all times and places is gathered around the altar."²⁰ This vision also unites the universal church of God and focuses its mission on the coming Kingdom of God.

In short, the liturgy is a means of dialogue between God and the world which brings people into a saving relationship with God and with one another. It enlarges their universe and gives them a vision that transcends the narrow confines of their temporal and selfish inclinations and offers them a spiritual and eternal perspective. It fills them with a vision of the Kingdom of God and enables them to resist evil and to care for the poor and the afflicted. Liturgy is the expression of overflowing joy in the victory of God over the powers of darkness; it is a ritual anticipation of the freedom and liberation that God offers.

1.2. The Lord and the Lord's Supper

According to the accounts of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels and in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and instructed his disciples to repeat the sign in his memory. For the church, the Eucharist is a worship of encounter with God in Christ who makes his presence felt in the church through his Spirit. It reminds the Church of the whole life of Christ, his ministry, death, resurrection and present exalted status.²¹ It challenges the church to keep on proclaiming Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God.

¹⁹ Alan Richardson says, "The Eucharist ... has its centre and meaning in heaven and not upon the earth." See *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958) 383.

²⁰ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 225.

²¹ Puthanangady says, "Liturgy is an act of anamnesis, that is, an action of the Spirit of Christ reminding the disciples of the presence and action of the Lord in their midst." See *Invitation to Christian Worship*, 271.

1.2.1. The origins

The church uses the term “Eucharist” as a synonym of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. But in the New Testament the word ‘eucharist’ (εὐχαριστία= thanksgiving) is used only to indicate a prayer of ‘thanksgiving’ (1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 4:15; 9:11-12, Eph. 5:4, *et passim*).²² On the other hand, the “Lord’s supper” (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, 1 Cor. 11:20)²³ and “the breaking of the bread” (κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου)²⁴ are the two phrases used in the New Testament to denote this sacrament. It is in the second century A. D. that the word εὐχαριστία was first used as a synonym of the Lord’s Supper. The sacramental connotation of the word probably derives from the fact that Christ “gave thanks” at the Last Supper (1 Cor. 11:24; Mt. 26:27, *pars.*). It may also indicate that the service of the Lord’s Supper is the “supreme act of Christian thanksgiving.”²⁵

The earliest reference to εὐχαριστία in the sacramental sense in Christian literature is found in *Didache* 9:1, dating from the end of first century or beginning of second century A. D. References are also found in the second century writings of Ignatius of Antioch, around 110 A. D. (cf. *Smyrn.* 8:1), and of Justin, around 150 A. D. (cf. *Apol.* 66:1).²⁶

Gregory Dix believes that the pre-Nicene liturgy had two parts, namely, the *synaxis* (συναξίς -- literally, “meeting”) and the Eucharist proper. The *synaxis* was a preliminary service of preparation, ministry of the Word, and intercession. The Eucharist proper consisted of ‘the breaking of the bread.’ The *synaxis* was a Christian version of the synagogue service. According to Dix, originally the *synaxis* and the Eucharist proper were two independent units of worship, each of which could be held without the other. Dix finds

²² Among the Jews the word is used to denote the elaborate prayer of thanksgiving or grace said before meals. See *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (London: SCM Press, 1986), s. v. “Eucharist,” by the editor.

²³ D.N. Freedman et al., eds., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “Lord’s Supper,” by Hans-Josef Klauck, trans. E. Ewert.

²⁴ Leon-Dufour would translate κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου as ‘the sharing of bread’ since it better reflects the practice of this rite of fellowship. See Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: the Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1994) 30.

²⁵ Early uses of the term are found in the *Didache* (9.1), in St. Ignatius (*Philad.*, 4, etc.) and in St. Justin (*Apol.*, 1.66). See *Oxford Dictionary of the Church*, F.L. Cross, ed., 3d ed., E.A. Livingston, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), s. v. “Eucharist.”

²⁶ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4, s. v. “Lord’s Supper,” by Hans-Josef Klauck.

evidence for this in the writings of Justin's *Apology* (ca. AD 150).²⁷ The synaxis consisted of opening greetings, singing of the Psalms, readings from the scriptures, sermon and intercessory prayers. The first part of the synaxis up to the sermon was open to all, Christians and non-Christians alike. But the non-members were sent out before the last part of prayers, when the body of believers, the Body of Christ, interceded with God in the name of Christ on behalf of the world.²⁸

1.2.1.1. The Last Supper: the scriptural accounts

There is no attempt here to undertake an exhaustive study of the biblical sources of the Last Supper, but only to call attention to some of its salient features. The Last Supper took place in Jerusalem during the Jewish festival of Passover. The scriptural accounts of the Last Supper are found mainly in the four Gospels (Mt. 26:17-30 // Mk. 14:12-26 // Lk. 22:7-38 // Jn. 13:1-38) and in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (I Cor. 11:23-34).

Paul's concise account of the Last Supper is found in 1 Cor. 11:23-34. Paul does not describe the Last Supper as a Passover meal (1 Cor. 11:23; cf. 5:7). There are several significant themes in his account. There are references to Jesus' self-sacrifice for human salvation (vv. 24-26) and of God's establishment of a new covenant with humanity (v. 25). There is a command to repeat the Lord's Supper as a memorial and proclamation of Jesus' death is unique to the Pauline account (v. 24-26). This account includes instructions to his readers to practise self-examination and repentance in preparation for the Lord's Supper (vv. 28-29). They are reminded of their responsibility to care for one another (vv. 17-22, 33). They are severely warned about the sure judgement of God upon those who are callous, unrepentant and uncaring about the poor in the congregation (vv. 27-34).

According to the Synoptic Gospels, the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-16; Lk. 22:8-13, 15). That motif would suggest that Jesus intended to connect the redemption that God performed through his life with God's redemption of Israel from Egypt and his leading of them to the Promised Land.²⁹ All the Synoptic Gospels emphasise the

²⁷ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 36-47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁹ A.J.B. Higgins has argued that the Last Supper was a Passover meal on the following grounds: (1). The Last Supper was a night meal; it was obligatory to eat Passover meals at night. 2. Jesus and his disciples recline at the meal indicating that it was a ceremonial meal. (3) There is a dish preliminary to the breaking of the bread at Passover. At the Last Supper its presence is indicated at Mk. 14:2 and Mt. 26. 23. (4) Wine is drunk on festive occasions, especially at Passover, (at Passover red wine is drunk). (5) Passover meals concluded with the singing of the hymn (Mk. 14: 26 par.). (6). After the meal Jesus did not return to Bethany. According to the custom, after Passover one was to spend the rest of the night in prayer in a demarcated area, outside Bethany though encompassing Gethsemane.

“(new) covenant” that Jesus has established through his sacrificial death, and highlight Jesus’ anticipation on the occasion of the coming of the “kingdom” of God. But each of the Gospels has its special emphasis on some aspect of the Last Supper. Mark stresses the establishment of the “(new) covenant;”³⁰ Jesus shared the bread and wine as symbols of his self-giving for establishing a new covenant, a new relationship between God and human beings (Mk. 14:22-24 pars.). Matthew emphasises the aspects of the “(new) covenant” and of the “forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28), and Luke pays special attention to Jesus’ anticipation of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 22:15-18 pars.; cf. vv. 28-29).

The Fourth Evangelist has a unique perspective on the Last Supper, according to which the Last Supper predates the Passover (Jn. 13:1)³¹. By shifting the date in this manner, Jesus’ crucifixion is shown as taking place at the hour when the Passover lambs are slaughtered in the temple implying connection between the death of Jesus and the Passover sacrifice. There is no mention of the words of the institution in the Johannine account.

Attempts have been made to categorise the meal in Jn. 13 as one of the several social or ritual meals, which were in practice among the Jews. Among the candidates are *kiddush*, which was a ritual family meal on the eve of Sabbath, *chaburoth*, a brotherhood meal, and *toda*, a meal of thanksgiving.³² Leon-Dufour tries to harmonise the Johannine and the Synoptic accounts by subscribing to the view that “Jesus ate his final meal in a Passover atmosphere but not according to the strict Passover rite.”³³

The Johannine understanding of the sacrament is to be found elsewhere in the Gospel. For example, Jesus in his metaphorical discourse in Jn. 6 describes not just his death, but his whole life in sacramental terms.³⁴ Higgins compares it with Paul’s understanding of the sacrament. He points out that while Paul associates the Eucharist (and baptism) with the death and resurrection of Christ, the Fourth Evangelist relates the sacraments to ‘the whole

(7) During the meal Jesus describes the bread and the wine in terms of his own body and blood. According to the Passover Haggadah it was customary for the person presiding the meal to explain the meaning of the various elements of the meal. See *The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1952) 20-21.

³⁰ The word for “new” is not found in all ancient manuscripts.

³¹ Raymond Brown holds that the meal in Jn. 13 took place “on Thursday evening, the 14th Nisan by the official calendar the day before Passover” and that “Jesus ate with his disciples a meal that had Passover characteristics.” See *Gospel According to St John XIII-XXI*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1970) 556.

³² See, for example, Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament*, 14-16, and Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 177, 303-306.

³³ Xavier Leon-Dufour, *ibid.*, 303.

³⁴ So A.B. Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament*, 78.

incarnation and life of Christ' which is redemptive in effect. As Higgins points out, "in the sixth chapter [of John] the living Jesus of history, the Word made flesh, who feeds a multitude with bread and fish, is identical with the Christ of the Eucharist who offers his flesh as the real food."³⁵ This view establishes the relationship of the living Christ with the Lord's Supper. It is not a dead Christ, but the risen and ever-living Christ, who is the source of eternal life; it is not just the death of Christ, but his whole incarnate life that is the means of salvation. This brings out the beauty of the Johannine perspective, which is a corrective for the bad theology that underlies many a melancholic and funereal "celebration" of the Eucharist.

Koester does not believe that the theme of the metaphorical discourse in Jn. 6 is primarily the Eucharist or that it suggests that the ritual observance of the Eucharist would guarantee eternal life. Koester convincingly argues that in this chapter, the Fourth Evangelist is making use of sacramental language to indicate the implications of the sacrifice that underlies the life, death and resurrection of Christ.³⁶ So the theme in this discourse is primarily the soteriological significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Here Jesus speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, which are the only sources of eternal life (Jn. 6:53-54). According to Koester, the Evangelist uses the words "eating" and "drinking" to refer to faith in Christ; here "eating" is synonymous with "believing" in Christ (cf. Jn.6: 28-29, 40, 47) who is the source of eternal life.³⁷

In the narrative of the Last Supper in Ch. 13, Jesus' symbolic washing of the disciples' feet assumes great significance. Christ seems to give it a soteriological significance and to treat it at par with the meal. By washing the feet of the disciples, Christ desired not only to sanctify their lives, but also to prepare them so that they may follow him and share in his destiny (Jn. 13:8; 15:2; cf. 17:17; Eph. 5:25ff.). The same is Christ's purpose for the Church. God in Christ sanctifies his Church in the Eucharist, washing it in the blood of Christ. Higgins points out that in the Fourth Gospel, "the foot-washing takes the place of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper." He calls the foot washing "an allegory of the Eucharist."³⁸

³⁵ *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, 78.

³⁶ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995) 99.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

Here the symbols are the 'basin' and the 'towel,' which indicate Jesus' servant-hood and his sacrifice. Here Jesus exhorts the disciples to imitate the loving service that he offers to friend and foe as the Servant of God. The bread and the wine of the meal fade into the background. There is no mention of repeating the ritual of sharing of the bread and the wine. The stress is on selfless love and at the meal the message of love is repeated (Jn. 13:34-35). The Evangelist mentions the 'morsel' that Jesus offers to Judas Iscariot as a token of love and forgiveness to a friend turned betrayer.³⁹ The symbols are different but the message is the same.

The scriptural accounts of the Last Supper in the New Testament manifest its various meanings. They present us with several strands of thought and indicate liturgical variety and freedom; these are factors that have implications for liturgical renewal today. The Fourth Gospel, for example, demonstrates several unique features *vis-à-vis* the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline narrative of the Last Supper. The Pauline narrative emphasises the soteriological value of Jesus' death, but the Fourth Evangelist stresses the redemptive character of the whole Christ-event. While the Synoptics concentrate on the Passover meal, the Fourth Gospel focuses on the Passover sacrifice, which is Christ. The Fourth Gospel dwells on the importance of faith as the proper response to God's offer of eternal life, which cannot be replaced by ritual activity; so it seems to overlook the institution of the Lord's Supper. According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet is more illustrative of the self-giving and sacrifice of Christ than the symbolic meal. In this way the Fourth Evangelist steers clear of blind ritualism. Apostle Paul on the other hand, reacts to unrepentant and callous attitudes to the Lord's Supper and uncaring treatment of the poor members of the congregation (1 Cor. 11:27-34).

1.2.1.2. Love and zeal for justice in the Last Supper

In the Gospels, one sees two driving forces or overriding passions at work in Jesus' character. One is his overflowing love towards the Father, which expresses itself in his pattern of intense prayer and communion with God. The second is his consuming and overwhelming zeal for divine justice that burns in him as a passion for the lowliest and the

³⁹ In Raymond Brown's view, the Fourth evangelist qualifies Jesus' action as "a basic gesture of Oriental hospitality, as can be seen from Ruth ii.14." Brown infers that Jesus may be treating Judas as a guest of honour. See *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, 578. According to Thomas Brodie (*The Gospel according to John*, Oxford: O U Press, 1993, 453), this action of Jesus is "as gentle and affectionate a gesture as one could imagine – like something a parent would do for a child or one lover for another." Brodie suggests that Jesus was making an effort to restrain Judas from Satan's trap.

lost; it fires his message of the Kingdom and illuminates his pathway to the cross. Both these qualities find their expression in the Last Supper.

Jesus' prayer pattern is the best key to his person. His life draws its strength from the heavenly Father by means of incessant prayer and unbroken communion and dependence on God, which Jesus terms as "abiding" in the Father's love (Jn. 15:10; cf. 11:41-42). Jesus encourages his disciples also to pray and to experience that special intimacy with God that he enjoys as the Son of the Father (cf. Mt. 6:9-13 pars.). He emphasises the need to pray without ceasing and without losing heart (Lk. 18:1; Mt. 7: 7-12 pars.). It is most expedient to watch and to pray (Mk. 14:38 pars.); prayerfulness is a synonym for the alert waiting for the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches the disciples about the right attitudes to prayer, stressing the importance of humility (Lk. 18:9-14) and faith (Mk. 11:22-24 pars.). It is essential to pray in secret (Mt. 6:5-6) and not to be pretentious in one's piety. The accent here is on personal, one-to-one relationship with God. Prayerfulness should be matched by a willingness to obey God (cf. Lk. 18:17-22) and a spirit of self-giving in the service of the Kingdom (cf. Mk. 12:41-44 par.). The one who prays is obliged to practise forgiveness towards one's enemies (Mt. 5:23-26; Mk. 11:25). Jesus encourages the disciples to depend totally on the Father; prayer that derives from such trust and dependence on the Father will be answered, especially when they are made in Jesus' name, that is, for the sake of Jesus and on account of Jesus (Jn. 15:7, 16; cf. 16:23-24). The ultimate purpose of prayer must be to seek God's Kingdom and God's righteousness (Mt. 6:33). Jesus exhorts his disciples to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:13). Prayer is the means of resistance against the powers of darkness (Mk. 9:29 pars.). Prayer is spiritual warfare that enables one to be victorious in temptation and to ward off evil (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 1-13; Mk. 14:37-38 pars.; cf. Lk. 22:31-32). Jesus' own prayer life is the model for the disciples although they have not seen him closely in his private hours of prayer and communion with God as much as they have when they became eyewitnesses of his heavenly communion at his transfiguration (Mk. 9: 2-8 pars.). For Jesus, prayer means submission of the self to God; prayer is the means of surrendering his will to the will of his Father, as at Gethsemane (Mk. 14:36 pars.). In prayer Jesus surrenders himself totally to the Father, that life of surrender reaching its finale on the cross, where his words take the form of prayer (cf. Mk. 15: 34 par.; Lk. 23:34, 46; Jn. 19:30). On the cross Jesus totally submits his life and work to the Father in prayer. His life is one long litany of prayer; it is the breath of his life.

The second driving force in Jesus' life and ministry is his zeal for divine justice. It underlies the Great Sermon (Mt. 5-7; Lk. 6) and permeates his teaching about the Kingdom of God

(Lk. 4:18-21; 11:42; Mt. 3:15; 6:33; 12:18, 20; cf. Jas. 1:27). Jesus teaches and practises the justice that is found in the “the weightier matters of the law” (Mt. 23:23). He desires mercy, and not sacrifice (Mt. 9:13). His approach to human needs and problems reflects this perspective. It is exemplified in his willingness to seek and save the lost, his forgiveness of the sinner, his mercy to the heart-broken, his equal generosity to friend and foe, and his life style of sacrificial love and humble service (Mk 10:45; Jn. 13: 1-20). It is substantiated in the way he boldly challenges evil powers and institutions, and confronts legal restrictions and oppressive customs whether they be casuistic Sabbath observances or ruthless divorce practices. In his vision on the purity of worship and the mission of the house of God, he is a jealous defender of God’s justice; his zeal for the temple takes the form of a riotous procedure to drive out its profaners (Jn. 2:13-22 pars.). His understanding of divine justice stands at variance with popular notions of justice (Mt. 5:20, 48). It deposes the hypocritical religious leader from his seat of honour and elevates the poor Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham. Jesus’ perspective on divine justice and his zeal for its implementation leads to confrontation with the powers that be and ultimately to his death on the cross (Jn. 11:48ff.).

Jesus therefore synthesises in the Last Supper his love of God, as expressed in his prayerfulness, and his overwhelming concern for the vindication of divine justice, as expressed in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This is much in evidence in the Johannine account of the Last Supper. Jesus loves the Father and lays down his life for those whom he loves ‘perfectly’;⁴⁰ he gives his life for the salvation of the world and in fulfilment of God’s will. He washes his disciples’ feet as a sign of his self-giving. The Lord and Teacher becomes the Servant of all (Jn. 13:14). In doing so he displays God’s justice that honours the weak and the humble and condemns the proud and the mighty (Jn. 13:1-20; cf. Lk. 1:51ff.). In this manner both love and justice find their integration in the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper, Christ takes the bread, blesses God, breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples. He takes the wine, blesses God and shares the wine with them (Mk. 14:22-25 pars.). The references to body and blood imply sacrifice. “Taking” denotes the act of setting something apart for God and “blessing” is the act of offering it to God. “Breaking” symbolises God’s acceptance and transformation of the offering. “Giving” implies receiving back from God of what is offered. For God transforms and gives back what is offered to him so that it may be used for his glory and for the welfare of all. These symbolic acts represent

⁴⁰ Michel Quoist says, “It is not Jesus Christ’s suffering that saved the world – it is the *love* with which he bore and offered his suffering. Wood cannot burn without a fire to consume it. Only love engenders life.” See *With Open Heart*, trans. Colette Copeland (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983) 223.

Jesus' self-giving: the act of Jesus' self-dedication is expressed in his total obedience to the Father's will. His self-offering culminates in his death on the cross when he 'transfers'⁴¹ his life into the hands of the Father (Lk. 23:46: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!") to be transformed in the miracle of the Resurrection, Ascension and Parousia.

Therefore the bread and the wine of the Eucharist connote offering, sacrifice and transformation. They symbolise the once-for-all self-offering of Christ (Heb. 7:27; 9:12,28). They also signify the church's calling to offer itself continually in the power of the Spirit. At the Eucharist the worshippers are brought face to face with the perfect, once-for-all self-offering of Christ for human salvation. The sacrifice of Christ cannot be repeated. On the contrary, the church's self-offering in the service of the Kingdom is to be continually repeated until the consummation of the Kingdom (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). The sacrament of the Lord's Supper represents the destiny of the believers who must set their lives apart in response to the divine call ("took") and offer themselves to God in repentance, faith and obedience ("blessed"). God accepts their offering, transforms them ("broke") and commissions them ("gave") to lead fruitful lives of service and witness in the world. Sacramental actions are human actions governed by the Spirit of God and involve the whole body of the church. The church has no better pattern for self-offering and transformation other than that of Christ who died and rose again full of love for his father and zeal for the vindication of divine justice.

1.2.1.3. The "meals of the Kingdom"

The Last Supper, which the Eucharist commemorates, cannot be studied in isolation from the several joyous meals that Jesus had shared with the people during his public ministry. In fact, the Last Supper was the culmination of them all. All the four Evangelists draw attention to these meals. The table-fellowship was a symbolic or dramatic representation of God's work of salvation revealed in Christ. It epitomised Jesus' ministry of offering God's forgiveness to ordinary and despised people, whom Jesus received into the Kingdom of God.⁴² At these meals he established close companionship with the dregs of humanity and the worst of sinners (e.g. Levi in Mk. 2: 15-17, the sinful woman in Lk. 7:36-50, and Zacchaeus in Lk. 19:1-10). He was considered their "friend." Chilton argues that Jesus'

⁴¹ This is how Mascall defines the phenomenon of sacrifice. He says that when a human being offers any thing to God in the form of a sacrifice, "It is not being destroyed but transferred to him (to God) in such a way that it is no longer under the control of selfish and sinful man." See E.L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist*, 2d ed. (London: Longmans, 1965) 94.

⁴² See below, Section 1.5.4.

action of associating himself with the “ritually impure” groups of people called in question contemporary Jewish ideas of purity. Consequently, Jesus’ table-fellowship with “tax-collectors and sinners” provoked scathing criticism and the possibility of stern legal action amounting to death.⁴³

But Jesus treated these occasions as celebrations of the coming of the Kingdom of God, which was the core theme of his message; they were prophetic and symbolic anticipations of the consummation of the Kingdom (cf. Mk. 2:19-20; Lk. 15; 19: 9f.;). Jesus’ demeanour at these meals is carried on to the Last Supper as the accounts of the Last Supper show. His humble manners, his use of the dramatic,⁴⁴ his affirmation of the coming of the Kingdom and his anticipation of its consummation⁴⁵, his message of reconciliation and pardon for sinners,⁴⁶ and his revolt against religious legalism are all reflected in the Last Supper.

The Last Supper symbolised the character and summed up the concerns of Jesus’ mission. The church’s celebration of the Eucharist also should mirror the mission of Jesus. The Eucharist is a sacrament of love in which the participants are cleansed, renewed and empowered for their life together as a missionary and servant community. It should bring the worshipper face to face with the living Christ and his passion to seek and save the lost at any cost.

1.3. The Participation of the Whole Church: The Eucharist and the Laity

This research which seeks to develop a People’s Eucharist is based on the premise that it is the whole church that celebrates the Eucharist and not the clergy alone. The word “laity” in the context of the church applies to all unordained members of the church -- men, women and children belonging to various social and economic categories including the Dalits, tribals and the disabled. In the majority of the “mainline” churches, traditionally the laity have only a secondary role in worship, especially in a eucharistic service. But the Eucharist is a free

⁴³ Bruce Chilton, in his book, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), argues that Jesus’ ideas of ritual purity and impurity was radically different from the ideas on the issue among the contemporary Jewish religious groups. In the sight of the fastidious Jew, the tax collectors and sinners with whom Jesus shared table-fellowship belonged to the impure categories of people. Chilton argues that “Jesus’ programmatic fellowship with them [tax-collectors and sinners] ought to be regarded as a significant factor in his ministry” (p. 29). Chilton contends that Jesus’ radical concept of purity was the chief cause of his crucifixion.

⁴⁴ Jn. 13:2-11.

⁴⁵ Lk. 22:15, 28-30.

expression of thanksgiving to God for his free gift of salvation, which is offered to one and all. Therefore the full, active, wholehearted and personal participation of every member of the church in the Eucharist is a matter of crucial importance.

1.3.1. Lay participation in worship

Worship, especially the Eucharist, is God's gift to the *whole* Church; therefore participation in the Eucharist is the prerogative and privilege of the whole Church of God, and of every member therein (1Pet. 2:4-5, 9; Cf. Ps. 148:11-12; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 4:12-17; Rev. 5:9-10). But many churches overlook the importance of the active participation of the whole congregation in worship. It is substituted by the representative, or rather, shamanic role of the clergy. The laity are kept away from the Lord's table with costumes, chants, movements, exotic languages or other means that the clergy alone are able to wield! All this has resulted in the alienation of the laity from the Lord's table. Often in the area of Christian worship the social, pastoral and spiritual needs of some sections of the church, like those of women, children, and Dalits are totally ignored.⁴⁷

The clergy must have appropriated for themselves the major liturgical role in the course of the church's history since in the early days they were probably the only literate group in the church. But the play of other factors in this matter like economic considerations and male chauvinism cannot be discounted. But the times have changed and today the demand for the full participation of Dalits, women, children, and the disabled in all spheres of life is being progressively recognised. Therefore the church must of necessity take measures to guarantee the active involvement of all sections of the laity in the worship of the church especially in the Eucharist.

⁴⁶ Jn. 13:27.

⁴⁷ In the Church of South India in Kerala (excepting the South Kerala diocese) the Dalit congregations are usually the "out stations" of the pastorates and as a rule they have the Eucharistic services only once in two months, or sometimes once in six months, or not rarely just once a year. This is mainly because they cannot find the resources to support a full time presbyter. So they have to accept their position at the bottom of the pecking order and wait for their turn to have the services of the presbyter in charge of the pastorate. But the high caste churches in the same pastorate (who can afford to pay the major share of the minister's salary) have the Eucharist once a week or more often. See Chap. 2, sec. 2.3.5.1. (e).

As for the neglect of the children and the youth, it seems that two of the four Kerala dioceses consider the Eucharist to be an adult affair. In the Basel Mission area of the North Kerala diocese, the Eucharist is considered too holy for the young to partake. In the South Kerala diocese it seems that children get in the way, and they (along with any non-communicants) are sent out before the Breaking of the Bread. See Chap. 2, sec. 2.3.5.4. (g).

The liturgical movement has emphasised the need for greater participation of the laity in the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council emphasised lay participation and the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* stated as follows:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 24-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.⁴⁸

The document goes on to say that the “full and active participation of all people is the aim to be considered before all else.”⁴⁹

The Lima text also rightly asserts that “it is in the Eucharist that the community of God’s people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations have to do with the whole church and the whole church is involved in each local celebration.”⁵⁰ It points to the moral and ethical task of the community of the faithful. Participation in the Eucharist has a great impact on the quality of life in the community. It says,

The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those who are regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God.... All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged and condemned when we share in the body and blood of Christ.⁵¹

This requires the full participation of the worshipping community in the Eucharist.

There are other reasons to insist on greater participation by the lay persons in worship. Compared to the clergy, the laity are closer to life’s realities and struggles. They hobnob with the general public in the course of their every day pursuits. They are in general more competent in the use of every day language and more adept in the use of art and the media. All these are valuable factors in Christian worship. Wherever lay persons have been

⁴⁸ *The Constitution*, sec. 14. See *The Documents of Vatican II*, 144. See also sec. 48, which reads as follows:

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers they should participate, knowingly, devoutly, and actively. They should be instructed by God’s word and be refreshed at the table of the Lord’s body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all and in all. *Ibid.*, 154.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sec. 19.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, sec. 20.

encouraged to make their contributions in these areas, worship has become richer and grounded in life's realities, and more effectively geared to the church's missionary task.

1.3.2. The "limits" of lay participation

What are the parameters for the 'full and active' participation of the laity? Given below is a comparison of two fairly representative voices of the Roman Catholic church and of the Protestant churches on the matter. The Roman Catholic view is taken from the book, *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*⁵² and the Protestant view is represented by an article written by Bishop Leslie Newbigin.⁵³ Both Catholic and Protestant wings of the church have their reservations about the full participation of the laity in the Eucharist.

The Roman Catholic Church has, since Vatican II, emphasised the full participation of the faithful. It holds that "the community in its entirety is priestly because it has its life from the same Spirit..."⁵⁴ This happens on account of its standing and unity in the Body of Christ; in other words, it is a corporate priesthood:

For while all Christians, by reason of their baptism, which makes them members of this ecclesial body, participate in the three-fold ministry that Scripture recognises Christ as having, they do not do so as isolated individuals [i.e. priest, prophet, and king].... But the same Spirit dynamizes the entire body to make it, in St. Augustine's fine phrase, 'a single Christ loving the Father'.... The liturgy is thus inseparably an act of Christ and an act of the Church.⁵⁵

But on the practical side the uniqueness and the superiority of the clergy remains. It is backed by the church's theology of the ministry, which virtually makes the clergy the sole celebrants of the Eucharist. The authors of the book, *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, argue for the priesthood of all, but manages to maintain the Catholic position that only the ministers are spiritually endowed "to perform the liturgical actions" being "the visible representatives of the Lord." The authors say,

It is as envoys and deputies appointed to an apostolic ministry that some members of the Church are delegated by Christ, through a special charism of his Spirit, to perform the liturgical actions in the bosom of the ecclesial community and thereby act as visible representatives of the Lord.⁵⁶

⁵² A.G. Martimort, et al., eds, *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, Vol. I: I.H. Dalmais, P.M. Gy, P. Jounal, and A.G. Martimort, *Principles of the Liturgy*, trans. M.J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987).

⁵³ Lesslie Newbigin, "Lay Presidency at the Eucharist," *Theology* 99 (1996): 367-368.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

So this is basically the Catholic position: only the individual clergyman, and not the individual lay person, has a share in the priestly office of Christ. What priestly status the laity have rests in their corporate membership in the one, holy, catholic church. On the other hand, the ordination and the 'special charism of the Spirit' make the clergy the only authorised celebrants of the Eucharist.

Bishop Newbigin, voices a fairly representative Protestant position on the issue in an article on the question of the "Lay Presidency at the Eucharist."⁵⁷ He argues that lay presidency at the Eucharist is not desirable for a different reason. According to Newbigin, the point at issue is not a question of being less or better endowed spiritually. He says that it is the representative character of the Christian minister's office that makes his or her role at the Eucharist distinctive. Evaluating the arguments for lay presidency at the Eucharist, Newbigin affirms that the lay people are equal participants with the clergy in the priestly ministry of Christ. The priesthood of Christ is the sole source and ground of Christian priesthood. Nevertheless the presidency of the ministers is a symbol of the church's catholicity. The minister is an official and ritual representative of the Church. He or she represents not just the local church, but the whole body of the baptised who compose the one, holy and apostolic Church. According to Newbigin, it is the representative character of the minister that precludes lay presidency at the Eucharist. He says:

As I understand it, the primary priesthood is that of Christ himself. Into this priesthood all the baptised are incorporated by their baptism and are called to exercise it in the power of the Holy Spirit. This priesthood is exercised by the baptised in the course of their daily life in the world. The one who is described as 'a priest' is part of this same priesthood and is called to a special responsibility to cherish, nourish, enable the priesthood of the whole body....⁵⁸

The role of the minister is distinctive because of its representative character; he or she plays his special role at worship as a representative of the whole church and the congregation. Therefore, says Newbigin, the whole body of the baptised engages in the liturgical action in the person of the minister. He says, "It is the whole body which remembers, gives thanks and prays for the consecrating action of the Holy Spirit. It is the whole body which is exercising its priestly function in and through the one who is called to lead."⁵⁹ In short, the laity have a vital role in the celebration of the Eucharist. They are joint celebrants of the Eucharist whether they preside over the Eucharist or not.

⁵⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, "Lay Presidency at the Eucharist," *Theology* 99 (1996): 367-368.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 368.

But both the Catholic and Protestant positions on lay participation in the Eucharist need to be re-examined. In most of the churches belonging to these wings, the participation of the laity at the eucharistic celebration is severely limited. The limitation set on the participation weakens the exercise of their spiritual gifts of the lay persons and restricts their contribution to the life and mission of the church. The question of who presides over the celebration is not the point at issue. The important question is whether the liturgy should be celebrated unmindful of the spiritual gifts and ministries among the laity. The official church at present sidelines the laity and is poorer for that reason. The church has to see the whole body of Christ as the community of believers who is equipped by the Spirit of God “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). Today’s church should not blindly follow the practice of the churches prior to seventeenth or eighteenth century, which had few educated lay members and the ministers had to do the thinking for the laity. But the overwhelming majority of today’s laity are composed of enlightened and thinking people who would like to participate actively and meaningfully along with the ministers in the worship of the church. The clergy will only strengthen the eucharistic presidency by sharing it with the laity.

The glory and wisdom of the Lord inhabits the whole church. The church’s liturgy needs to reflect that fact in its worship. The whole church has to participate in the eucharistic worship in order that it may be a rich experience of communion with God and the people of God.

1.3.3. The presence of Christ among his people

Many churches treat the communion elements of the bread and wine as the locus of Christ’s ‘real presence’ and even tend to limit that presence to the elements, which could be preserved within the confines of the church. There is comparatively little emphasis on the living presence of Christ in the midst of the people of God and on the implications of that presence.⁶⁰ The Lima document, while emphasising the trinitarian character of the divine presence in the Eucharist⁶¹ subscribes to the view that the communion elements are pre-eminently the sacramental signs of Christ’s presence.⁶² It also points out that “some

⁶⁰ Leon-Dufour says, “It is odd that instead of attending to the mystery of the new presence of Jesus Christ who gives himself in the Eucharist, people should be concerned about how the bread and wine are changed into his body and blood.... The eucharistic mystery is even isolated thereby from the other mysteries of faith, so that instead of being a part of the history of God’s plan, it is considered separately, in itself, and independently of the relation between God and human beings, which alone is a source of meaning.” See *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 6.

⁶¹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sec. 14.

⁶² See for example, *ibid.*, sec. 15: “It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the

churches stress that Christ's presence in the consecrated elements continues after the celebration"⁶³ and therefore have the practice of reserving the sacraments. But there is a great danger in this singular focus on the communion elements; while all attention is focused on the transformation of the communion elements into the body and blood of Christ, there is little emphasis on the urgently needed transformation in the life of the individual believer or of the worshipping community.

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist has several dimensions. Jesus is present in the church as the gift and the giver of salvation. Jesus is the Bread of Life as well as the Giver of the Bread of Life. Jesus' presence at the Eucharist is in the role of the host of the meal, the real "president" of the Eucharist as well as the real food, the Bread of Life, or the "Bread *which gives life*" (cf. 6:33).⁶⁴ He is "the bread which comes down from heaven." Therefore neither should the communion elements be identified with the Bread of Life nor should the minister be mistaken for Jesus Christ. The minister and the communion elements are but symbols of spiritual truths and spiritual phenomena that are at work in God's scheme of salvation. The Bread of Life is Jesus himself, the living Saviour, whom the worshipper may recognise and honour in order to receive life eternal. To put it in crude terms, the bread and wine are *symbols* of Christ's self-giving, and not *samples* of his body and blood. Christ's presence transcends all human and material elements in the Eucharist. Haag's interesting picture of Christ's eucharistic presence in the guise of a typical oriental host must make the idea clearer. He says,

He [i.e. the Risen Lord] is and remains the now invisible host. He presides over the meal. In this we should remember that especially in the understanding of Eastern peoples the host does not merely supply his guests with food and drink: he gives them above all his presence and thus himself.⁶⁵

Christ as the host of the Lord's Supper is present among the people. In this sense, the gathering of the faithful for worship is the locus of Christ's presence. Christ makes himself

Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, sec. 32.

⁶⁴ J.H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John, Vol. I*, The ICC Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 198. According to Bernard this is the primary meaning of ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς (Jn. 6:35). He relates the phrase to ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζων in v. 51. This phrase means 'living Bread,' i.e. the Bread that has life in itself." He points out that the one that gives life must have life in itself or himself. See *ibid.* See also Marsh who treats the phrase "Bread of life" (Jn. 6:35) as a genitive of apposition and translates it as, "bread that is life" which, "because it is life, can bestow life on others." See John Marsh, *Saint John*, The Pelican New Testament Commentaries (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968; reprint, 1972) 301.

known to the worshippers, the people of God, both clergy and laity, in the breaking of the bread. Christ is present among his people. They are pre-eminently the signs of Christ's presence. The presence is in the meeting of the people and in their fellowship (Mt. 18:20). It is to be experienced in their unity and their concern for one another and for the world. Christ lives in his church, as it is being transformed into his body when it shares in his suffering in the world. As it is often said, the church is the body of Christ, broken for the life of the world.

Jean-Luc Marion derides what he calls the "eucharistic physics" that brandishes grand theories like transubstantiation. He argues that the presence of Jesus is in the worshipping community. He adds, "One must pass from Jesus present in the host to Jesus present to a people whose eucharistic action manifests reality under the sacramental form."⁶⁶ According to him neither special people nor special prayers at the worship can mediate the presence of Christ at the Eucharist but only the worshipping community by its devotion ("consciousness" or "attention") to his presence. He says, "Eucharistic presence is measured by what the attention of the human community presently accords it."⁶⁷ The whole community or the body of the ordinary worshippers and their unity in prayer provide the environment in which Christ's presence becomes available. Therefore he maintains that the communion elements have no validity outside the context of worship where Christ makes himself available to his community of believers.

Scholars who try to define the eucharistic presence tend to concentrate on anyone of its aspects. According to John Macquarrie, the presence of Christ at the Eucharist is a "multiple presence." Christ's presence is to be experienced not only in the bread and the wine, but also in the proclamation of the Word, in the person of the minister, and in the gathering of the eucharistic community.⁶⁸ He says, "Christ's presence, therefore, as a personal presence, is not localised in the bread and the wine, yet nevertheless these elements have become the focus of his presence."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Herbert Haag, *Clergy and Laity: Did Jesus Want a Two-Tier Church?* Trans. Robert Nowell (Tunbridge Wells, Burns and Oates, 1997) 60

⁶⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982) 166.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 167.

⁶⁸ John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM Books, 1997) 127.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

E. Schillebeeckx gives a different dimension to the idea of real presence. He speaks about the 'reciprocity of the real presence.' The sacramental bread and wine symbolise both the self-giving of Christ and that of the worshipper:

The sacramental bread and wine are therefore not only the sign which makes Christ's real presence real to us, but also the sign of bringing about the real presence of the Church (and in the Church, of us too) to him. The eucharistic meal thus signifies both Christ's gift of himself and the Church's responding gift of herself.... The sacramental form thus signifies the *reciprocity* of the real presence.⁷⁰

Christ makes himself present as the crucified and risen one. It is the presence of Christ in the church that transforms the church and everything therein to be a sign of his life-giving power.

In his book on christology, *Jesus the Liberator*, Jon Sobrino takes exception to the fact that those who adore the presence of Christ at the Eucharist choose to forget the reality of the historical Jesus, his character and his demands. He says,

The presence of Christ here and now, while it might give guarantees of the existence of Jesus, usually ignores his specific reality and may come into conflict with it. Structurally speaking, it is difficult to start from this position and subsequently reach the total reality of Christ, which includes Jesus as he was in life.⁷¹

This warning is to be heeded. The Eucharist must take the worshipper closer to the historical Christ whose presence at the Eucharist is a saving presence, as well as a judging and challenging presence.

A balanced view is represented by Peter Lampe who analyses the understanding of the Eucharist in the letters of Paul. According to him, the Pauline emphasis is on the ethical implications of the Eucharist. He says on the basis of 1 Cor. 15:29 and 10:13 that, beyond doubt, "for Paul and the Corinthians, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, with his saving power, was personally present at the Eucharist as the host of the ritual."⁷² 1 Cor. 11:26 affirms that every celebration of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of Christ's death. The Lord's Supper makes Christ's death "*present* for Christians."⁷³

⁷⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968; fourth impression, 1980) 139.

⁷¹ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus, the Liberator: a Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1994) 43.

⁷² "The Eucharist: Identifying with the Christ on the Cross," *Interpretation* 48 (1994): 42-43.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 44.

But, according to Lampe, the text I Cor. 11:23-25 does not provide sufficient support to prove that the Corinthian Christians believed in the real presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. For, he says, “the cup or the wine is *not* equated with Christ’s blood. The cup signifies the new *covenant* that was established *because* of Christ’s blood on the cross. In a similar way, the expression ‘This is my body for you’ does not necessarily refer to the bread.”⁷⁴ He argues that it refers rather to “the liturgical act of blessing and breaking the bread (11:24). This act points to Jesus’ body on the cross and to his death on the cross.”⁷⁵ According to Lampe, the ethical implications of the Eucharist were “far more vital” to the Corinthian Christians than the question of the real presence in the communion elements.⁷⁶ But the presence of Christ is a real experience in the life of a worshipping assembly whose members identify with the crucified and risen Lord by loving and serving their fellow-beings.⁷⁷

Lampe does not provide sufficient evidence to prove that the words of the institution have but the indirect meanings that he implies. But Lampe’s primary intention is to make sure that the church does not place unwarranted emphasis on the ritual, for, he points out, “because of his death on the cross, the Lord himself, not the ritual, saves.” The accent on the ethical implications of the Lord’s Supper is well taken.

At the Eucharist the worshippers encounter the ‘ground of their being’ in Christ. That presence changes everything: the place, the atmosphere, the communion elements, the people, their social relationships, and so on. But the presence of Christ cannot be confined to any of these.

1.3.4. The presence and the transformation

The Eucharist is concerned with transformation. In fact, it sets the stage for two transformations: firstly, transformation of the worshippers’ understanding of Christ; and, secondly, transformation and renewal of the worshippers themselves, so that they have the qualities of the church, the people of God.

The first one is the transformation of one’s inadequate understanding of Christ; it derives from a limited vision and little faith. Such a transformation happened to the disciples of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. This point will be discussed later. See below, sec. 1.5.3.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 44-46.

Jesus at the transfiguration of Christ. The Synoptic Gospels give the impression that following their presence at the transfiguration, the disciples received a new understanding of Jesus' person and they were enabled to view Jesus in an entirely new light. According to Mark, even "his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them" (Mk. 9:3). The disciples were awe-struck. Their mountaintop experience is a glorious illustration of worship encounter with God.⁷⁸ They were given a new vision of Jesus – as the glorious Son of God to whom everyone should give ear (Mk. 9:2-8).

Similarly, today at the Eucharist the same Jesus makes himself present among the gathered community of worshippers to be "transfigured" before them and for their sake. It is a glorious experience; here is the Kingdom coming with power (Mk. 9:1 pars.). The worshippers acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Every thing is seen in the light of the glory of Christ shining in their hearts.⁷⁹ No wonder the bread and the wine on the table receive a new meaning. They may be compared to the garments of Jesus, which became glittering white at his transfiguration!

The second transformation the Eucharist is concerned with is that of the worshipping community and its individual members. Jesus desires that transformation just as at the Last Supper he desired the transformation of the disciples. He would like them to become partakers of his suffering. Jn. 13 describes the Last Supper of Jesus, the scene of Jesus' preparation for the Passion. For the Evangelist the Passover is not just the meal, but rather the whole passion of Jesus; Jesus is going to offer up his life as the perfect paschal victim on the cross. Against the backdrop of Jesus' impending sacrificial death, the Evangelist sketches a picture of Jesus yearning for the transformation of his disciples. It is clear from the narrative of the Fourth Gospel that Jesus washes the feet of his disciples with this earnest desire in mind. He wishes to prepare them for the climactic events of his public ministry; he cleanses them so that they may 'have part' in him (Jn. 13:7-11). But regrettably the disciples are seen as distant and dispassionate, totally at loss to grasp either the gravity of the situation or the intention of Jesus. They are as casual and relaxed as ever; Judas among them is silent and mysterious, lost in the darkness of his soul. Nevertheless Jesus opens his heart. He is their teacher and Lord, who loves them perfectly. Having washed their feet, he interprets for

⁷⁸ At the transfiguration of Christ, the disciples were privileged to listen to heavenly conversations (Mk.9:4, 7); so does the church hear the Word of God at the Eucharist. Christ is with the disciples throughout (v.8), so is he present at the worship. The disciples disappoint us: they speak gibberish (v.5) for they do not know what to speak or do. But they should not surprise us being so much like us in their demeanour, mere strangers totally at loss in the house of God!

⁷⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 4:6.

them the nature of his mission (vv. 31-33). He breaks bread with them. Then he goes on to give them the gist of his teaching which is his last will and testament to them (vv. 34-35; also, chs. 14-17). All this is intended for the transformation of the disciples.

In fact, in all the four Gospels, at the Last Supper, Jesus' attention is focused on the disciples (cf. Lk. 22:25-34). It is not the bread or the wine that is the centre of his attention. It is true that Jesus sees in the bread and the wine symbols of his life and destiny as well as those of his disciples. Jesus knows the lack of preparation on the part of the disciples to face the future. They have to undergo radical change and spiritual transformation if they were to represent his Spirit in the world. They have to overcome their own timidity, lethargy, contentiousness, blindness and selfish pursuits. They must grow into a close-knit community exemplifying moral qualities of mutual love, unity, self-giving service, and other values of the Kingdom. Jesus is about to complete the process of ushering in that Kingdom with his consummated life on the cross and its vindication in resurrection. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' concern for his disciples is clearly articulated in the 'high priestly prayer' (Jn. 17). At the Last Supper Jesus yearns for the transformation of his disciples and symbolises that transformation in the washing of the feet and the breaking of the bread.

In the eucharistic worship, it is the Spirit of God that works transformation in the believer. Christ, the host of the Eucharist, gives himself to the believer as the Bread of Life. As Jean-Luc Marion points out unlike ordinary food which becomes part of the body of the person who consumes it, here the believer who consumes of the Bread of Life becomes part of Christ's body. He says,

In consuming this food, we do not assimilate Christ – to our person or to our “social body,” or whatever.... On the contrary, we become assimilated through the sacramental body of the Christ to his ecclesiastical body. He who takes communion worthily “will not be transforming Christ into himself, but instead will be passing over into the mystical body of Christ.”⁸⁰

This is how a body of worshippers become the Body of Christ to bear witness to the presence of Christ in his world and to engage in the mission of God among the poor, oppressed and suffering ones.

⁸⁰ See Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, 179. In his endnote he quotes from Saint Bonaventure (*Breviloquium*, VI, 9, 6) to show the root of this idea in St. Augustine's words: “Grow and you shall feed on me. But you shall not change me into your own substance, as you do with the food of your body. Instead you shall be changed into me.”

But for centuries the Church has concentrated its attention on the transformation of the communion elements and has neglected the need for change in its own life and attitude. Such ritualistic preoccupations have diverted the Church's primary attention from the urgent need for renewal in the life, mission and witness of the worshipping community. But Christ demands the 'transubstantiation' of the worshippers into his body broken for the life of the world. Imitating Jesus, they have to become servants and witnesses for the sake of others. Jesus desires their self-dedication for the service of the kingdom and their crucial transformation as the children of God. The people of God are the sacramental signs of the real presence of Christ in the world.⁸¹

Segundo views the Eucharist as an 'efficacious sign' setting before the church a model for self-giving love and service. He says,

...The Eucharist is not a sign for the world; rather it is a sign for the Christian community which seeks to be at the service of the world and thus to be itself a sign.... The Eucharist is a sign – an efficacious sign by virtue of the grace it offers – of what the Christian community ought to be.... The Eucharist signifies to us, and confers on us, the possibility of loving each other and of transforming this love into an impetus and a message for the entire humanity.⁸²

The presence of Christ is not to be confined to the elements or the time or the venue of the Lord's Supper, rather it must shine forth in the life of the worshipping community and in their unity and concern for one another and for the rest of the world.⁸³ This is possible only in the life of a community, which is being transformed day by day in communion with Christ in the great drama of salvation clearly if feebly enacted in the Eucharist.

⁸¹ Henry de Lubec in his book, *Catholicism* (Orig.: 1947, London: Burns & Oates, 1962), quotes a thought-provoking comment by St. Augustine (*Sermo 272: Patrologia Latina* 38, 1247-1248) about the transformation of the ordinary bread into the body of Christ in the Eucharist:

" 'The Body of Christ,' you are told, and you answer 'Amen.' Be members then of the Body of Christ that your Amen may true. Why is this mystery accomplished with bread? We shall say nothing of our own about it, rather let us hear the Apostle, who speaking of this sacrament says: 'We being many are one body, one bread.' Understand and rejoice. Unity, devotion, charity! One bread: and what of this one bread? One body made up of many. During the time of exorcism, you were, so to say, in the mill. At baptism you were wetted with water. Then the Holy Spirit came into you like the fire, which bakes the dough. Be then what you see and receive what you are." See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1993) 80.

⁸² Juan Luis Segundo, *The Sacraments Today: a Theology for a New Humanity*, trans. John Drury (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1968, 1980) 4.

⁸³ The Orthodox Church terms the church's social witness as the "liturgy after the liturgy." See Ion Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996). Bria refers to the words of St John Chrysostom who spoke of two altars: one within the church and the other in the public square, indicating that the Christian's social and cultural engagement and witness is part and parcel of the divine worship within the four walls of the church (p. 76).

1.4. The Eucharist as Drama

The eucharistic liturgy has remarkable dramatic qualities. Its every celebration is an episode in a cosmic drama, in which the triune God and the heavenly hosts are actors. Its premise may be summarised in these words of Jesus: "... In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). Its plot concerns the story of God's redemption of the world and human participation therein, which is unravelled in moving scenes, crisp dialogue, and spirited singing. Like in all drama, the element of conflict is present -- the conflict between God and the powers of darkness, between the kingdom of the self and the kingdom of God, between the good and the evil. Ideally it is a participatory theatre that draws the audience into the action. It is a theatre for the self-instruction of the participants. To unfetter the dramatic features of the Eucharist is to energize its communicative capabilities.

Christopher Irvine⁸⁴ compares the worship of the church to theatre, and the liturgical action to artistic performance. According to him, worship, just like theatrical performance, needs clarity of symbols and precision of movement in order to make visible the sacred mysteries of God's saving action. Irvine says,

If, however, there is one lesson, which we can positively draw from contemporary theatre, it is the view that effective symbolic communication requires symbols and symbolic acts to be visible and deliberately focused.... Liturgy is action, the corporate action of the Body of Christ, and unquestionably should have a dramatic effect upon its participants.⁸⁵

In support of his views Irvine draws attention to the statements of Dom Odo Casel (1886-1948), who was an early stalwart of the liturgical movement and an ardent advocate of the active participation of the laity in worship. Casel in his writings had highlighted the dramatic character of the Eucharist. Casel said,

Worship is a holy drama in which men fulfil an action while Christ, unseen, carries to perfection his work of salvation. He is comrade of our feast, but the vital centre of it; what we do he does in reality. We act with him as body with his soul; our action is one. By baptism we become the members of Christ, we become one Christ

⁸⁴ Christopher Irvine, "Celebrating the Eucharist: a Rite Performance," *Theology* 97 (1994): 266-264.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 259-260.

with the Son made man; in this way his act can become our act as well. In the sacred mystery he acts with his body, gathered from all the world, the *ecclesia*.⁸⁶

It is imperative for the church to rediscover the dramatic character of the Eucharist so that the whole church can participate with enthusiasm in the 'holy drama' of salvation in which every member of the worshipping community has a role to play. Being drama, the Eucharist is a group activity, where participants lend support to one another and all join together to render glory to God.⁸⁷

The authors of the book, *The Church at Prayer: Vol. II: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, look at the dramatic character of the liturgy. They view it a kind of 'symbolic action' or 'play':

...The liturgy, being the action of a community that draws upon all its available means of expression constantly makes use of the symbolic character of these means, be they gestures or words. It can be said that in a sense the liturgy functions as play. In play human beings look beyond the immediate, utilitarian purposes of their actions and pass to a level at which actions that in everyday life are simply means acquire a coherence of their own and yield a meaning that delights not only their authors but those who identify with the game as they watch and listen.⁸⁸

The authors hasten to add that the liturgy is more than play because it has "reference to a transcendent reality that human action by itself cannot apprehend."

In his article "Liturgical Theopoetic: The Acts of God in the Act of Liturgy," Richard McCall refers to the dramatic features and structure of the liturgy.⁸⁹ He emphasises the nature of the liturgy as an *act* rather than as *word*. The liturgy is "enacted rite." It is a composite of action words, or "verbal gestures," or, in the words of J. L. Austin, *illocutionary* words.⁹⁰ McCall would compare liturgy to an Aristotelian theatre. Just as the theatre is "structured action" around a plot, the liturgy is also structured action with "physical gesture, sound, movement, and plot." Just as in a drama, there is the building up and release of tension in the unfolding of the story of salvation. As in a drama, the liturgy

⁸⁶ Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1965), 159.

⁸⁷ In the Eucharist the church is preparing to face its future. Duncan Forrester says, "The eucharist thus involves a proper kind of 'play-acting': we are trying out the roles that will be fully ours in the realm of God, just as young children play 'let's pretend' games to get the feel of being mothers or fathers or teachers or soldiers." See *The True Church and Morality: Reflections on Ecclesiology and Ethics*, Risk Book Series (Geneva: WCC, 1997) 55.

⁸⁸ *The Church at Prayer I*, 235.

⁸⁹ *Worship* 71 (September 1997): 399-414.

⁹⁰ Austin defines illocutionary act as "performance of an act *in* saying something..." See J.L. Austin *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1962, 1975) 99.

also moves to a climax and to denouement. Just as in the case of theatre, the effect or impact on the participants depends on the design of the plot and structure of the liturgy.⁹¹

1.4.1. Negation of the dramatic

But the great drama of salvation has fallen perhaps into the wrong hands. The tendency to downplay the dramatic character of the Eucharist has its roots in the Western church where the word has upstaged the image. Chris Arthur cites Diane Apostolos-Cappadona ("The Art of Seeing Cultural Values: the Why of Religion and Art in Public Education," *Religion and Public Education* 15, 1988, p. 423), who, referring particularly to the attitude of the church, says that the role of the visual "has been downplayed in Western Culture since the reformation, when the word – printed and spoken – became the symbolic centre of modern values."⁹² Historically the Western church has favoured the use of written sources as the means of religious communication. Arthur says that the persistence of this attitude in the modern age is questionable when visual modes of communication have the edge over other means. He remarks, "Given the current pre-eminence of TV, a sensitivity to images also has enormous contemporary relevance."⁹³

⁹¹ Kenneth Stevenson recollects a personal experience that impressed upon him the role and the effectiveness of the dramatic element in worship. He was attending a Syrian Orthodox eucharistic service in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Although the worship was in Aramaic language, he had no problem in enjoying the atmosphere and the force of the liturgical drama that was being enacted. The priest who celebrated the liturgy used his voice, hands, and eyes to bring out the meaning of each part of the worship. For example, at the blessing of the elements, he touched with both hands first the bread, then the cup of wine, and then his own breast; he was, of course, indicating God's blessing upon the bread and the wine and upon the worshippers as well. Stevenson says that the gestures were so precise and so effective that they clearly expounded the "intention" of the Eucharist for the participants. He says, "When I saw his simple gestures, all the long, tedious debates that have gone on in the Christian West about how Christ is present in the sacrament paled into insignificance." See Robert Cotton and Kenneth Stevenson, *On the Receiving End: How People Experience What We Do in the Church* (London: Mowbray, 1996) 27-28.

⁹² Chris Arthur, "The Art of Communicating Religious Diversity," *Media Development* 40/1 (1993): 3. Arthur cites the poet Edwin Muir ("The Incarnate One," in *Collected Poems, 1921- 1958*, London: 1960):

"The Word became flesh here made word again,
A Word made word in flourish and arrogant crook.
See there King Calvin with his iron pen,
And God three angry letters in a book,
And there the logical hook
On which the Mystery is impaled and bent
Into an ideological instrument." (Ibid., 3).

Arthur comments, "If we want to avoid impaling and distorting Mystery, we need to take seriously the fact that expression of it can occur beyond words." (Ibid., 4).

⁹³ Ibid.

But the church needs to appreciate the place of the dramatic in its communications. It was more in action than in words that Jesus, in the course of a simple meal, showed his disciples that his life of loving service and his death of sacrificial character would open the way of salvation for the whole world.⁹⁴

1.4.2. Jesus' use of the dramatic in the Last Supper

The event that was staged in the Upper Room that night was a prophetic drama capable of holding the past, present and the future together, for it had implications for each. At the same time it drew its audience into an unprecedented intimacy with the protagonist of that drama of communion.

Jesus has richly made use of dramatic communication in his public ministry, *suited* 'the action to the word, the word to the action.' His teaching, interspersed with parables, was rich in dramatic imagery. Even his non-verbal communications were singularly eloquent and effective (e.g. Mk. 1:41; 3:5; 4:38 *et passim*). His miracles were dramatic to the core and their message clear as crystal. Jesus announced, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt. 12:28).⁹⁵ Jesus' symbolic actions, like his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, and the washing of the disciples' feet, were highly dramatic episodes. Therefore it is perfectly congruous with Jesus' style of communication that he employed the dramatic in the Last Supper. His primary intention was to teach his disciples about the mystery of divine redemption of the world through his personal sacrifice and their role in God's redemptive mission.

At the Last Supper, the words and actions of Jesus were so poignant and moving in that electrified atmosphere of ritual memory and redemptive hope that characterised the Passover celebration. At that very hour the disciples were led into close communion with Jesus. His life flowed into theirs. The stories of the disciples became inextricably amalgamated with the story of Jesus – that story could even take in the tragic episode of Judas who had chosen to steal away into the outer darkness.

⁹⁴ In his preface to the book, *The Eucharist in India* by J.C. Winslow, et al. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920, xxv), Edwin Palmer, then bishop of Bombay, said,

We recognise that it was of the Divine wisdom that our Lord left us not with a form of words, but with a series of actions: '*Do this*' He said (not *Say this*) '*in remembrance of Me.*' Words would have needed translation. The acts need only to be repeated; they interpret themselves from the simplest experiences. The Lord's symbol of unity was the identity of the acts.

⁹⁵ Jesus' miracles are picturesque in dramatic detail. See, for example, Mk. 7:31-36: the healing of the deaf mute: the act of healing is full of so many 'little' actions, seven or eight of them, whereas Jesus

1.4.2.1. The story of Jesus and the story of the Old Testament

To appreciate the presence of the dramatic element in the Last Supper, it is necessary to examine its religious background. According to the Gospels, Jesus shares the meaning of his impending death against the backdrop of the Passover and the Exodus story. The theological motive of the Gospels is to show that the redemption that Jesus brings about effects a new exodus from sin, evil and death. Jesus celebrated the Eucharist in the context of his self-revelation as the Messiah who brings the kingdom of God through his victory on the cross. The Passover festival was the most appropriate time to teach the disciples the meaning of his sacrifice.

In other words, the Passover and the Exodus and their religious associations provide the background story for the Christ-event and offer the Church valuable clues to discover its implications. The story of Jesus cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament story of the people of God, their despair and their hope, their visions and their expectations. The Old Testament story of the people of God provides the background of Jesus' story. For, that is how the Evangelists have shared the story of Jesus with their readers. To divest the story of Jesus of its backdrop is to lose its meaning.

1.4.2.2. The story of Jesus and the story of the disciples

Significantly enough, Jesus wanted his disciples to associate the stories of their lives with the story of his own life, the story of liberation accomplished by his cross.⁹⁶ When the sons of Zebedee appeal to Jesus to guarantee them seats of honour at the eschatological messianic banquet, he asks them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised?" (Mk. 10:38). Apparently not comprehending the implications of the demand of Jesus, they mumble, "We are able." Jesus was indicating to them that they would share his destiny only when they participated in his life of suffering and death for the sake of others (cf. Mk. 10:45).

In spite of themselves the sons of Zebedee, and the other disciples, are already treading the path of discipleship. They have obeyed his call to follow him; Peter says, "Lo, we have left

was requested to do just one thing, that is, 'to lay his hands upon him' (v. 32)!

⁹⁶ David Stacey points out the similarities between the prophetic actions of the Old Testament and the demeanour of Jesus at the Last Supper. He shows especially how Jesus, like the prophets who involved other people in their drama, involves the disciples in his story through his symbolic actions and words at the Last Supper. See "The Lord's Supper as Prophetic Drama," *Epworth Review* 21/1(1994): 65-74.

every thing and followed you” (Mk. 10:28). But to participate in the suffering of Jesus (without overlooking it, or denying it, or fleeing from it) they have to render a greater degree of obedience. It will enable them to drink the cup that he is to drink and to be baptised with the baptism he is baptised with. They forget that they are weak, timid and easily discouraged, while they boast of their strength, like Peter (Mk. 14:29-31 pars.). They forget they need to be replenished by strength from above to follow Jesus on the way of the cross. They are blind to their need for an endowment of grace, faith and strength to accompany Jesus to Gethsemane, and to watch with him as he would struggle in prayer to receive new strength to obey the Father’s will. They need spiritual strength to lend him support (cf. Mk. 3:14), as he would take in his own hands the cup, which the Father has offered him.

The Last Supper is the finest hour for the disciples to receive new strength from Jesus. Jesus invites them to associate themselves with his body and blood by partaking in the holy sacrament. But it would appear that the disciples fail to grasp the significance of the event. They seem aloof and uninvolved, sleepy, subject to temptations, impulsive and cowardly. But did they realise then that Jesus had bound them with bonds of love in an eternal covenant and communion with himself that night?⁹⁷

1.4.2.3. The story of Jesus and the church’s history

The story of the disciples is more intimately conjoined with the story of Jesus, after the Pentecost when the small community of the faithful is unwittingly drawn into the way of the crucified and risen Christ. The church boldly bears witness to the message of new life in Christ. Consequently, it is reviled and persecuted for the sake of Christ and his Kingdom, the stories of individual believers, and of the church retrace the thorny path of Jesus; they face misunderstanding, calumny, rejection by their own people, and physical assault. Alternatively, they discover that when the church is being persecuted, Christ is in anguish (cf. Acts 9:5). So from then onwards the story of Christ and the story of the church flow

⁹⁷ The story of Jesus, and the Bible for that matter, is a story that enspells the reader. To use the expression of Middleton and Walsh, it is not a “safe” story that allows the reader to return to his or her old ways of life easily without evaluating them in a new light. It is a story that would turn the world of the reader upside down. As Middleton and Walsh says, “We cannot read this story without being caught up in its drama. We cannot claim to have genuinely understood the Bible without taking the risk of improvisation.” See J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995) 195.

together in one stream -- in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.⁹⁸

Just like the Last Supper, the church's celebration of the Eucharist is also the juxtaposition of three stories: the story of the Exodus and of Israel, the story of Jesus, and the story of the church, the people of God.⁹⁹ Therefore, it is impossible for the church to explore the significance of Jesus' story without reference to the history of salvation recorded in the Scriptures. Alternatively, the story of the church and the stories of Christian suffering and martyrdom, and, for that matter, any narrative of human struggle and misery, will lack meaning and purpose until they are anchored to the story of Jesus who died and rose again from the dead.¹⁰⁰

The eucharistic narrative must appear like an exquisite tapestry made up of many colourful threads. It should outline the work of salvation of the triune God as revealed in the life and experiences of Israel, the elect people of God; it must focus on the story of the life, suffering and glorification of Jesus, the Son of God that has impinged on upon human history to change its course from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth, and from death to immortality; and it should recount the suffering and salvation of the people of God as they struggle against sin and injustice to match their story with the destiny of the crucified and risen Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

At the Last Supper Jesus had asked his disciples to share his cup of suffering. Today at the Eucharist in the same vein he asks the Church and the individual believer to share his destiny. It is in communion with Jesus that the world will find meaning in its episodes of life and death.

⁹⁸ Later when Paul confesses "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), he means that his story has become identified with the story of the crucified one. Peter Lampe, op. cit., p.47, quotes the following passages to assert that the Eucharist for Paul becomes an experience of personal identification with the reality of Christ's death: Gal. 6:17; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:8-11; Phil. 3:10 *et passim*. In this connection the following words of Cavanaugh seem to be appropriate: "The bodies of the martyrs make the church visible as the body of Christ." Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 70.

⁹⁹ "Worship and storytelling are remarkably close to one another. In worship stories are retold, re-enacted, recalled, meditated upon, and the story of the community of faith is grafted together with the personal stories of the worshippers." See Forrester, et al., *Encounter with God*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ According to Johann Baptist Metz the story of Jesus provides "a dangerous and at the same time liberating memory that oppresses and questions the present because ... it compels Christians constantly to change themselves so that they are able to take this future into account." See *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980) 90.

1.4.3. The eucharistic drama and the church

The church will benefit by strengthening the dramatic form of the Eucharist. It will bring out the dynamism of the liturgy. Liturgy will become an aesthetic experience as well as a learning experience. Dramatisation of the liturgy will involve expanding its narrative by adding to it themes from the life and conditions of the people and their world. It means enlisting greater participation by its members and even of people from outside the community in the celebration of the Eucharist in the roles of actors, singers, technicians, musicians, instrumentalists, and so on. Men, women, children, all will have parts to play. It means adding words, music, movement, colour, light, and other paraphernalia to the orders of worship. Liturgical action will develop by leaps and bounds beyond the capacities, capabilities, and peripheries of the church. It will force open the doors and remove the walls and the barbed wire that separate the church from its neighbours. The Eucharist will no more be an esoteric rite but a public ritual, a proclamation of the Good News in the streets. It will certainly have tremendous implications not only for the church, but for the life of the village and the city and the region as well.

1.5. The Eucharist as Learning Experience: the Ethical Dimension

Participation in the Eucharist needs to be a learning experience for the church. On the one hand, it should enable the believing community to learn of the redeeming love of God and his purpose, and on the other, to learn of its own mission in the world. The church's mission in the world is to bear witness to the Kingdom of God and its values. The life-style of its members, their words and their actions should reflect these values of 'justice, mercy and faithfulness.' The mission of the church hinges on its ethical witness. The church exists in a world where corruption, oppression and injustice persist. There are sections of humanity, like the Dalits, tribals, women, and the children of the poor, that are being systematically subjected to exploitation by the rich and the powerful. There are people who are condemned to live in subhuman conditions on account of their ignorance, powerlessness, and total inability to stand up to the oppressors. The church has to bring alive the good news of God's liberation in such a contexts by its stance, its service, and its celebration. The Eucharist is, par excellence, the church's medium for experiencing and affirming God's victory and its means for resisting the power of darkness (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26; 1 Jn.5:4f.). In practising the ethics of the Lord's supper, the church's primary sources are, the example of Christ and his

teaching on the Kingdom of God as well as the ethics of his apostle Paul who struggled to bring the Gentile churches in line with Judaeo-Christian morality. The tenor of Jesus' ethical teaching that underlies his message of the Kingdom of God is his announcement of divine forgiveness that changes the status of divine-human and human-human relationships in the twinkling of an eye (Mt. 9:13; 12:7; cf. Hos. 6:6). The enabling grace of God in Christ is the major theme in Pauline ethics (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13). It is the Holy Spirit that provides the strength for the church to live in accordance with values of the Kingdom of God.

1.5.1. The pedagogic function of the Eucharist

Jesus was pre-eminently a teacher and it appears that he intended the Last Supper to be a learning experience for the disciples (cf. Jn. 13-17). The church's celebration of the Eucharist is also a learning experience, where the worshipping communities become receptacles of the Word of God, set in the living context of the people. The Eucharist then is a means to receive divine inspiration and to gather strength to be the witnesses and servants of God. Puthanangady calls for thoughtful planning of the liturgy and careful conduct of the worship. He reminds the church of its social responsibility. He says, "The mystery of Christ has to be celebrated in such a way that the whole life-situation of the community can be enlightened by it."¹⁰¹ Puthanangady points out that the liturgy demands personal response on the part of the participant. Active participation involves communion and reconciliation within the local congregation. He says,

Active participation in the liturgy is achieved not by performing mere external actions during the liturgy, but by an authentic personal response to the Word of God. The personal character of the response is very much conditioned by the relationship that exists among the members of the community.¹⁰²

A church enlightened by the liturgy will manifest its true response to God in the areas of its service and witness in every day life.

1.5.2. The Eucharist: a ministry of intercession in a broken world

Christian worship is not a selfish pursuit or private concern for the self-improvement of a few religiously inclined individuals. It takes place in an unjust world where corruption, inequality, and oppression rule the day. Ideally at worship the church renders praise and honour to God, and makes intercession on behalf of the world. The church represents the

¹⁰¹ Puthanangady, *Invitation to Christian Worship*, 281.

whole world to God, its creator and redeemer. The Church that is involved in and burdened about the suffering of the people carries the pain and the tears of the people to the divine presence. The Greek word λειτουργία¹⁰³ (literally, work or service rendered to the people or to the nation) originally referred to service rendered to the nation or to the general public by wealthy citizens. In the later ecclesial usage it denoted “service, the pious service which is rendered to God ... and also to the community....”¹⁰⁴ The word ‘liturgy’ has these implications when it refers to the worship of God that the church is expected to render. Puthanangady says,

Liturgy celebrates the struggles and anxieties, joys and consolations, victories and achievements of the world today because Christ is active in the midst of the world and is inviting it to go towards the final goal, that is, communion with the Father through him. A theology that describes this liturgical experience will certainly have to be a theology of involvement.¹⁰⁵

Therefore the liturgy reminds the church of its task of participating in the mission of Christ in the world to serve, to suffer, and to intercede. As Karl Rahner says, “the Church is ... the continuation of the task and function of Christ in the economy of redemption, his contemporaneous presence in history.”¹⁰⁶

1.5.3. The Eucharist proclaims divine justice

The eucharistic practice becomes meaningful only in the church’s engagement with its ethical dimension. Peter Lampe draws out the ethical implications of the Eucharist from various passages in the Pauline epistles.¹⁰⁷ Lampe particularly draws attention to a few passages to highlight the link between the cross of Christ and the conduct of Christians, and between the Eucharist and Christian ethics. His intention is to show how Christians “proclaim Christ’s death” by taking part in the Lord’s Supper.¹⁰⁸

1 Cor. 8:11; 11:22 – Christ died for all, so strong Christians should not trouble weak Christians, and rich Christians should not humiliate the poorer ones.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament IV*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M. Eerdmans, 1967), s. v. λειτουργία by H. Strathmann.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Invitation to Christian Worship*, 271.

¹⁰⁶ Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, ninth impression (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1986) 13.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Lampe, “The Eucharist: Identification with Christ on the Cross,” *Interpretation* 48 (1994): 44-45.

Phil. 2:7-8 – The Eucharist represents the self-denial of Christ for human salvation, it must remind the comfortable ones of their duty towards those who are starving.

Rom. 6:2-8 (cf. 2 Cor. 4:15; 4:12; I Cor. 4:11, 13, et passim) – The Eucharist confronts Christians with the self-denial and vicarious suffering of Christ on the cross and demands them to be actively concerned for others.

Since the Eucharist is a means of entering into communion with the crucified Lord; it enables the church to understand the pain and grief of the suffering ones, and bring glory to God by serving them. Lampe says,

In the Eucharist, Christ's death is not made present and "proclaimed" (11:26) only by the sacramental acts of breaking bread and drinking wine from one cup. In the Eucharist, Christ's death is also proclaimed and made present by means of our giving ourselves up to others. Our love for others represents Christ's death to other human beings.¹⁰⁹

Lampe adds that the Lord who is present at the Eucharist with his saving power and enters into communion with the believer is, at the same time, 'a judging Lord' (cf. 11:29-32) demanding ethical conduct and behaviour.¹¹⁰

Lampe argues that the roots of the Pauline concept of the Eucharist, which brings together the cross of Christ and Christian ethics, are to be sought not in mystery religions, but in the teaching of Jesus on discipleship and self-denial.¹¹¹ Like Lampe, many others have emphasised the ethical dimension of the Eucharist. Some of these views are summarised below.

Gerwin Van Leeuwen points out that the uniqueness of Christian church and its worship rests upon the ethical behaviour of its members. Christ himself has projected love for one another as the guiding principle for his followers (cf. Jn. 13: 34-35). He says, "The greatest challenge before us is not how we can formulate and protect our specificity, but how we can promote faith and love, justice and hope for all."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 47-48; also, the author's end note 27.

¹¹² Gerwin Van Leeuwen, "Liturgy: What We Have In Common," in *Sharing Worship: Communio in Sacris*, ed. Paul Puthenangady (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1988) 534.

Gustavo Gutierrez, in his *Theology of Liberation*, underscores the prerogative of the eucharistic community to exemplify in its life the liberative aspects of the gospel. He says, "the church itself, in its concrete existence ought to be a place of liberation."¹¹³ He shows that the Eucharist is a "memorial and a thanksgiving" for the total self-giving of Christ" for human salvation. The work of Christ accomplishes "a profound human fellowship." The restoration of communion with God and the establishment of communion among people are both celebrated in the Eucharist. Gutierrez points out that "communion with God and others presupposes the abolition of all injustice and exploitation."¹¹⁴ He demonstrates that the bread and the wine symbolise God's gift of the bounty of creation to all people without discrimination. He says that the "Eucharist appears inseparably united to creation and to the building up of a real human fellowship."¹¹⁵ Gutierrez, in his book, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, states that the Eucharist is an expression of solidarity with those who suffer in the world. At the same time it is a "joyous acknowledgement of the risen Saviour who gives life to and raises the hope of those assembled in *ecclesia* by his words and deeds..."¹¹⁶ He says, "The Eucharist celebrates hope."¹¹⁷

Gutierrez argues that the Eucharist is also a demand for justice. He quotes from "Documento final" of the Fourth International Congress of Theology,¹¹⁸ which asserts that the Eucharist and the Word of God should be central to the communities of the oppressed. For, the Word and the Sacrament hold out "a promise and demand for justice, of the freedom and the fellowship for which peoples of the Third World are struggling." According to Gutierrez, the Eucharist enables the whole church of Christ to affirm its solidarity with the suffering ones.

Another voice is that of Tissa Balasuriya who finds it impossible to detach religious fervour from the practice of justice. He was impatient with the slow pace of the liturgical reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council and their alleged failure to relate worship to the pressing problems of the people. He says, "The Eucharist was meant to be a symbol, a

¹¹³ Gustavo Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson; revised edition (London: SCM Books, 1988) 147.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *We Drink from Our Own Wells: the Spiritual Journey of a People*, trans. Mathew J. O'Connell, (London: SCM Books, 1984) 134.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "Documento final," in *Paginas 28* (March 1980) 6, cited by Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 134.

commemoration and a participation in Jesus' liberative action. But today, when it is aligned to domination, its impact is toward preserving the status quo."¹¹⁹ He adds:

The Eucharist is a spiritual food insofar as it leads to greater love, self-unity, and communion among persons and groups.... The Eucharist must also lead us to a response to the suffering of the masses, often caused by people who take a prominent part in the Eucharist.¹²⁰

Balasuriya wants an "action oriented liturgy." He says, "If Christian communities are to participate in the ongoing revolutionary struggles for a better world, the liturgy must be related to them."¹²¹ In this aspect he feels that "the communication media can help bring issues to the consciousness of the participants."¹²² Balasuriya represents many angry people who allege that the church has put considerable distance between the oral proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom and its tangible expressions in ethical life.

The Eucharist is not just a sign of the willingness of the church to practice of justice, but rather it is the specific context for the demonstration and practice of divine justice. It is the occasion for the church to take its stand against injustice and evil, to share its resources among the needy, and to practise reconciliation and forgiveness. It is the place where the people of God should equip themselves to do justice in their homes, neighbourhood and places of work.

1.5.4. The Eucharist and the demands of the Kingdom of God

The Eucharist reminds the church of all that God in Christ has done, is doing now and will do in the future. To confront Christ in the Eucharist means to be confronted with the message of God's Kingdom. But all too often, there is a tendency to overlook the connection between the Eucharist and demands of the kingdom of God. That is to say, many regard the Eucharist as an end in itself in isolation from the ethical demands of the Kingdom. Such an attitude causes lethargy in Christian life and makes the church a complacent, insular, and self-serving community. Here the liturgy must play its didactic role.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (London: SCM Books, 1979) 6.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ So Catherine Vincie calls for explicit liturgical prefaces and prayers for socio-political freedom and justice, so that people may become conscious of the fact that Jesus in his public ministry was concerned with the expression of the kingdom of God in history and not just with metaphysical aspects of salvation. She adds, "Because the prefaces almost exclusively focus on Jesus' suffering and death without reference to the relationship of his life to his death, they offer a far too narrow view

At the Last Supper, Jesus looks forward to the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God; he says that he shall not drink the fruit of the wine until that day when he drinks it new in the Kingdom of God (Mk. 14:25; Mt. 26:29; Lk. 22:15-18). According to Joachim Jeremias, Jesus uses this 'vow of abstinence' with the unwavering confidence that God shall bring into being the Kingdom, and then Jesus will be able to share table fellowship with his own. It will be the occasion of "perfect communion between the redeemed community and its Redeemer" in the context of the "transfigured creation."¹²⁴ So at the Last Supper, the vision of the coming Kingdom of God, which is his overwhelming passion, rules the mind of Jesus. In fact, Jesus sees in the little community around the table the 'first fruits' of the Kingdom (Lk. 22:28ff.).

The vision of the coming Kingdom should serve as the focus of the church's hope and the stimulus and overriding concern of its mission. The Lima document describes the Eucharist as a "sign of the Kingdom."¹²⁵ It asserts that "the Holy Spirit through the Eucharist gives a foretaste of the Kingdom of God: the church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord's return."¹²⁶

The church can ill afford to lose sight of this vision. Cavanaugh says, "If the Eucharist is indeed a memorial of the whole of Christ, however, then it recalls more than the past events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but also expresses an ardent longing for the future completion of the Kingdom Christ inaugurated."¹²⁷ Marion shows that the Eucharist is at the same time a memorial and an anticipation (Phil.3:13: ἑπεκτασις or "straining") which have implications for the basis and the goal of the church's mission in the world. He says, "The memorial and the *epektasis* ... traverse the present from end to end."¹²⁸

Elsewhere Cavanaugh draws attention to the fact that the author of the Letter to the Hebrews mentions the glory of the ongoing worship in heaven to his readers in the midst of their persecutions and difficulties. The purpose of the author of Hebrews is to instil courage and

of God's salvific love for us." See "The Cry for Justice and the Eucharist," *Worship* 68 (1994): 205.

¹²⁴ *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955) 172.

¹²⁵ WCC, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sec. 1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 18.

¹²⁷ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 226.

¹²⁸ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, 174. Zizioulas calls it the "memory of the future." He quotes from the anaphora of St Chrysostom to show its presence in the Orthodox tradition: "Remembering the cross, the resurrection, the ascension and the second coming, Thine own of Thine own we offer Thee." See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985) 180.

hope into them by giving them a vision of the future. In the same way the church's vision of the coming of the Kingdom in all its power and glory must fire its celebration of the Eucharist in a tortured world. Cavanaugh says,

At the Eucharist the feast of the last day irrupts into earthly time, and the future breaks into the present. The ekklesia or church to which the author [of the Letter to the Hebrews] refers is not merely the church in its flawed earthly manifestation but the church in its full and proper sense, the eternal gathering of all creation by Christ into the Father's Kingdom.... Under the sign of the Eucharist the Kingdom becomes present in history through the action of Christ, the heavenly High Priest. In the Eucharist the heavens are opened, and the church of all times and places is gathered around the altar.¹²⁹

The Eucharist is therefore a sacrament of the coming Kingdom of God. It gives the worshippers of today a taste of the future. They are able to see not only the past and the present but the future as well.

Jesus' public ministry highlighted this message. But Jesus was criticised by his detractors for eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners. He was ridiculed as a 'glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Lk. 7:34). Jesus justified his manners by claiming that he was to the sinners what a physician was to the sick. He meant that his table fellowship was intended to bring sinners into the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, these common meals with the sinners and the downtrodden, who were the very dregs of humanity, were celebrations of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God were the highlights of the table fellowship. Levi, the tax collector, is found at the meal in Capernaum. The penitent woman, who washes Jesus' feet with her tears and anoints them with a costly ointment, is found at the meal in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Jesus eats a meal at the house of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector. According to Eduard Schweizer, by allowing the penitents to share the table with him, Jesus granted them forgiveness and reconciliation with God without as much as a pronouncement of absolution.¹³⁰

In those moments of communion with Jesus at meal, the penitent sinner came to know the forgiving love of God. He or she was able to participate in a *koinonia* that is the sign of the Kingdom of God. These were also occasions when the disciples, among other followers of Jesus, were initiated into fellowship with these new followers. Thus the early community of

¹²⁹ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 224.

¹³⁰ Eduard Schweizer says, "By his calling of Levi to himself, by his sitting down to a meal with publicans these *have been* adopted into fellowship with God." See *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1960) 14.



Jesus was founded around the dining table which Jesus converted into an eschatological banquet table in celebration of the coming of the Kingdom of God.¹³¹ Not surprisingly one listener, enthralled by this experience and filled with a vision of the Kingdom of God, exclaims, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Lk. 14:15).

The Gospel accounts of the miracles of the feeding of the multitude (Mk. 6:32-44 pars.; 8:1-10 pars.) provide readers elegant miniatures of the joy in the Kingdom of God. They touch on the people's trust in Jesus, their new sensitiveness to the needs of others, their joy in sharing of resources, their feeling of satiety, and their sense of fellowship -- all celebrated characteristics of the Kingdom of God. They become realities because Jesus is among the people urging them and even forcing them to care for those who are in need ("give..., go..., see..." Mk. 6:37f.) and to surrender their energies and personal resources for the welfare of all. It is then that God works his miracles and the Kingdom makes its presence felt.

But the Last Supper is to be distinguished from the other meals that Jesus so splendidly transformed into celestial feasts. It was a special meal, which Jesus preferred to have in the exclusive company of the Twelve. He foresees the role of the disciples in the coming glorious Kingdom (Lk. 22:28ff.). Here the accent is on *koinonia*. Jesus speaks about the new covenant that the cup symbolises. It is God's pledge of fidelity and love. Covenant also epitomises unity based on reconciliation with God. Therefore Jesus emphasises the aspect of unity that he desires among the disciples. ("A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another..." Jn. 13:34). In the high priestly prayer the emphasis is again on oneness ("... that they may become perfectly one..." Jn. 17:23). The Eucharist is the symbol of a people who have found a unity in Christ that surpasses even irreconcilable differences. The Eucharist is the hallmark of a unified people anxiously awaiting the consummation of the Kingdom of God.

A burning issue in the Corinthian church that Paul dealt with was the scandalous problem of disunity in that church. It was glaringly evident at the communion table where the rich Christians went on callously with the Eucharist and the associated common meal without waiting for the poor who came in late, hungry and with empty hands.¹³² Paul views this as a grievous fault. He warns the Corinthians about the dire consequences of eating and drinking

¹³¹ Jon Sobrino says, "A shared table is still the great sign of the kingdom of God." See J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: a Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1994) 104.

¹³² Peter Lampe discusses the pattern, and the social and religious circumstances of the Corinthian Eucharistic meal in his article, "The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross," 36-49.

“without discerning the body” (1 Cor. 11:29). Commentators generally agree that “the body” here refers to the body of Christ, the church.¹³³

The Lord’s table is a great unifying force for humankind. Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn. 12:32; cf. 10:16; 11:51f.). Here in microcosm is the human community of the future when God will unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The church’s celebration of the Eucharist is an anticipation of the Kingdom of God in all its glory. It is a prayer for the coming of the Kingdom: “Thy kingdom come!” In other words, the Eucharist is a ritual that hastens the coming of the Kingdom of God.¹³⁴

Gregory Dix in his monumental work, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, discusses the corporate nature of the eucharistic worship. He says,

... All eucharistic worship is of necessity and by intention a *corporate action* – ‘Do this’ (*poieite*, plural). The blessed Bread is broken that it may be *shared*, and ‘we being many’ made ‘one Body;’ the blessed Cup is delivered that it may be a ‘*partaking* of the blood of Christ. It is of the deepest meaning of the rite that those who take part are thereby united indissolubly with one another and with all who are Christ’s, ‘*because*’ (*hoti*) each is thereby united with Him, and through Him with the Father, with Whom He is One.¹³⁵

In societies where people are divided along economic, political, religious, communal, or caste lines, the celebration of the Eucharist is an indictment upon such divisions and a call to unity (cf. Gal. 3:28).¹³⁶ For a pluralist country like India, where divisive tendencies on the

¹³³ “[A] crime against the Lord of the Church himself, a sin against his body and blood (verse 27)” See A.J.B. Higgins, *The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament*, 73. Orr and Walther say, “If the body means the people of the church celebrating the supper together, judgement comes because they do not discriminate the divine nature of this fellowship and are guilty of splitting it apart and mistreating its humbler members.” See W.F. Orr and J.A. Walther, *I Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 274.

¹³⁴ Lima text calls it the ‘meal of the kingdom.’ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sec. 14.

¹³⁵ Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 1.

¹³⁶ See an extract from the statement of the National Consultation, jointly convened by the Catholic Priests’ Conference of India and the Forum of Religious for Justice and Peace, which was held in Bangalore, India from 14 to 17 April 1998, on the eve of the special assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. This section of the statement is a condemnation of the discrimination shown to women in the church:

It is in table-friendship and food-sharing that the Christian community expresses the truth of her being the sign of God’s reign. At the shared table women and men become Jesus’ disciples, equal and free, and recognise themselves as such. The bread-sharing Jesus-community is essentially classless, casteless, and non-sexist. They eschew and denounce all forms of “dominance-subservience” in leadership roles and styles of functioning. To measure up to this ideal, today’s church must free herself from the shackles of patriarchal-hierarchical structures taken over from imperial-feudal social models. “Telling the Good News: an Indian Response,” *Voices from the Third World* 31 (June 1998): 128.

basis of caste and religion, language and region rear their ugly head every now and then, the Eucharist offers the challenge and possibility of a unified humanity in Christ.¹³⁷

Forgiveness is the supreme message of the eucharistic table. At the Eucharist one hears the Good News, "You have been forgiven!" The Eucharist is similar to that great feast of celebration at the return of the prodigal son. For those who are unwilling to accept this forgiving love, it is the end of the road, it is the end of life. But for those who are humble enough to see and to listen and to experience, it is the great message of salvation; the great doors of heaven break open to receive them. It is the beginning of a new life. The long winter of discontent is over and the spring has broken in. The Eucharist is a spring festival!

The purpose of the Eucharist is to bring justice, peace and salvation to a perishing world. It symbolises the just sharing of God-given resources. At the Lord's table no one eats or drinks for himself or herself. On the other hand, each feeds the other at the fountain of life. A thin wafer and a spoonful of wine: can these satiate the world's hunger? But that is the mystery; that is the *skandalon* of the cross, for they who would joyfully share a morsel of food at worship must then take up the vision to share their resources with people in need in the wider community.

Koinonia, or fellowship, which is the basic character of the Eucharist, is a subversive word. All are equal around the Lord's table. The worldly masters must cast away their crowns, shed their pretensions and recognise their basic status as children of God, which is the greatest thing of all. It calls for a radical reappraisal of the participants' social and economic relations. Gustavo Gutierrez, discussing the nature of the Church as a sacramental community, says, "The place of the mission of the Church is where the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the creation of human fellowship are indissolubly joined."¹³⁸ The Eucharist is not only the centre of the church's worship, it is the growing edge of the church as well. The Eucharist is a feast and an invitation to fellowship. Jesus, who eats and drinks

¹³⁷ Even today caste prejudices are rife in the church. Generally speaking, in the Kerala CSI dioceses, Dalit and non-Dalit Christians do not worship together. There are few mixed congregations. Social intercourse among Christians of "high" and "low" castes is very much limited.

The following is a true story from the past. In the period of the British raj in India, a group of Christians from Tanjore wrote a letter to the then law minister Macaulay, complaining about the missionaries. It said: "These missionaries, my Lord, loving only filthy lucre, bid us to eat Lord's Supper with Pariahs as lives ugly, handling dead men, drinking arrack and toddy, sweeping the streets, mean fellows altogether, base persons; contrary to that which St. Paul saith, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.'" Cited by M.M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1971) 13.

¹³⁸ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 148.

with the tax collectors and sinners and opens the Kingdom to them, reminds the church that its mission is to welcome the poor and the oppressed into its fellowship.

David F. Ford argues that the remembrance of the passion of Christ must expose the church to the bleeding points of human life. He refers to the ritual (and often, perfunctory) remembrance of Christ's passion in the Eucharist. Ford says, "The remembering is false if it is not connected with entering more fully into the contingencies and tragic potentialities of life in the face of evil and death. There can be no quick leap across Gethsamane and Calvary."¹³⁹

Elsewhere Ford refers to the three-fold attitude of the communicant: willingness to serve Christ in faith, hope and love; readiness to serve one's brothers and sisters in the church, and above all, commitment to serve the larger community. For, he says, it is in that community that "one can be blessed, fed, incorporated, commanded, and one's ordinary life taken up into the drama of God's hospitable participation in the world."¹⁴⁰

Duncan Forrester challenges the church to discern "the Lord's presence in the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned neighbour."¹⁴¹ Forrester says,

The eucharist is nourishment for those *seeking* the kingdom and its justice, and not the feast at the end of the journey. Passive acceptance of injustice, hostility and division may make our eucharists questionable. We need today to recover ways in which the eucharist may be a healing, effective, transforming sign of community and hope, as well as of commitment to the overcoming of division.¹⁴²

Jon Sobrino in his book, *Jesus the Liberator*, endorses the element of hope in the eucharistic celebration. He observes that the poor, "have the capacity to celebrate what beneficent and liberative signs there are. And they celebrate it in community, like Jesus, around a table. The shared table is still the great sign of the kingdom of God."¹⁴³

¹³⁹ David F. Ford, "What happens in the Eucharist?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (1995): 368.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 379.

¹⁴¹ D.B. Forrester, "Ecclesiology and Ethics: a Reformed Perspective," *Ecumenical Review* 47 (1995): 153.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁴³ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 104. He quotes the martyr Fr. Rutilio Grande SJ who, while preaching a weeks before his assassination, had said:

God, the Lord, in his plan, gave us a material world, like this material Mass, with the material bread and the material cup we are about to raise in Christ's toast. A common table with a big tablecloth reaching everyone, like this Eucharist. Everyone with a stool, and the table, tablecloth and place settings reaching everyone. Christ, at the age of thirty-three, celebrated a farewell supper with his closest friends and told them this was the great memorial of redemption. A table shared the brotherhood, with a place and a setting for everyone.... It is

The Eucharist is a word of freedom. It is the church's blue print for action and its mandate for mission. It is its means of resistance against injustice. It is the assurance of victory and channel of hope to millions. It gives substance to their dreams of God's Kingdom. It brings the justice of God to the world, to all people living in their special situations and cultures. Here the question of inculturation becomes relevant and urgent.

1.6. The Inculturation of the Eucharist¹⁴⁴

The Eucharist is an act of the whole body of the Church or the Church universal.¹⁴⁵ The universal Church has its local expressions in indigenous cultures. In the past, younger churches in the developing countries have inherited or borrowed liturgical forms from their mother churches in the West or the East, as the case may be, in full or in part. These forms were often adopted without adaptation, or deference to local cultural sensibilities, or recognition of local resources. In many situations, these liturgies have stifled local liturgical initiatives. In course of time, apart from the corrosion of foreign-ness of these liturgies on account of their over-familiarity or by unwitting indigenisation, not much has happened by way of inculturation. The situation seriously hinders the meaningful participation of the believers in worship and interferes with the mission and witness of the Church in the larger community. People who are outside the Christian community find it difficult to make sense of the church's pattern of worship and rituals on account of their cliché-ridden language, alien thought forms, and exotic symbolism. It is in this context that the inculturation of the liturgy becomes an urgent task for the church.

The phrase 'inculturation of the liturgy' refers to the process of localising the liturgy, reshaping it in terms of local cultural, religious, philosophical and artistic concepts, traditions and practice. It involves the effort of the church to pray in its own words, and to use local thought forms, indigenous expressions of devotion and spirituality, and locally meaningful physical postures and movements. It involves the use of the history of the local people in which God in Christ chooses to work out his salvation. Above all, inculturation means placing the liturgy in the nub of the life and contemporary experiences of the people, so that

the love of shared fellowship that breaks and overthrows all types of barrier and prejudice and will overcome hate itself. *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁴⁴ See a fuller discussion on inculturation in Chapter 4, sec. 4.7.

¹⁴⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sec. 19.

worship becomes an active engagement with the whole gamut of human experience at the local level, with its problems and possibilities, joys and sorrows, hopes and despair.

The purpose of the inculturation of the Eucharist is to enable people to participate in worship actively and wholeheartedly. Inculturation demands good grasp of the theological and historical aspects of the liturgy, genuine appreciation of the local culture and sincere willingness to enter into dialogue with it. 'Local culture' in this context refers to the living, contemporary culture of the people and not the culture of a bygone era, as some Roman Catholic liturgists in India of the past decades mistook it. They tried to adapt elements from the defunct Sanskrit and Brahminical heritage thus neglecting the culture of the masses who were still suffering from the traumatic Brahminical hegemony of the past.

1.6.1. The price of inculturation

Anscar J. Chupungco who is a votary of inculturation discusses the implications of inculturation in his article, "Liturgical Inculturation and the Search for Unity."¹⁴⁶ According to Chupungco, inculturation implies respect for what is valuable in culture, willingness to adopt and adapt cultural elements, and to critique culture in the light of the Gospel. In his earlier book *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*,¹⁴⁷ Chupungco offers a detailed discussion on the process of inculturation. He believes that every culture has an unchanging core and a changing exterior of 'structure, language and symbols.' Therefore, inculturation must be a continuous process that constantly keeps pace with contemporary cultural ways of making meaning.¹⁴⁸ He says that the Counter Reformation principle *Ecclesia semper reformanda* is applicable to liturgical renewal and adaptation: *Liturgia semper reformanda*.¹⁴⁹

At the same time, Chupungco voices his fears of a thoughtless and fanatical approach to inculturation. For, according to him, such a process may result in a kind of cultural imperialism. It could reduce the sacred liturgical action into a mere socio-cultural activity. It could obscure the catholicity of the Church by highlighting this culture or the other.¹⁵⁰ Such fears are not totally groundless. But at the same time the process of developing culturally valid forms of liturgical action must be carried out relentlessly.

¹⁴⁶ In *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship*, eds. Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC, 1995) 55-64.

¹⁴⁷ *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁵⁰ Chupungco, "Liturgical Inculturation and the Search for Unity," 59.

1.6.2. Reflections of two Indian theologians

In this connection it is interesting to note how two Indian theologians of yesteryear have interpreted the Eucharist, namely, A.J. Appasamy and Nehemiah Goreh. Appasamy uses the thought forms of Vedanta and the *Visishtadvaita* of Ramanuja to interpret the benefits of the Eucharist while Goreh uses a 'fulfilment' approach to Hinduism.

Bishop A J Appasamy (1891-1975) was a bishop of the Church of South India. An erudite scholar in Indian philosophy and an enlightened Christian theologian, he has written several books articulating the Christian faith to learned Hindus. His attempt was to explain the meaning of the Eucharist in the categories of Vedanta philosophy. In his book, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga* (1928), he points out how Christ uses the imagery of hunger and thirst. He satisfies human quests as the bread of life and the source of water that wells up to eternal life.¹⁵¹ He quotes the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (3.2) which says, "Food is *Brahman*: for from food creatures are born; by food the creatures thus born live; and into food they enter and perish."¹⁵² It implies that food is a symbol of divine power and grace. Appasamy expounds the meaning of the Eucharist making use of this analogy of food:

Behold the living Christ enters into us and forms a part of our inmost self in the same organic way in which food and drink become part of our being.... Christ Himself comes into our souls through the elements and abiding in us endows us with his spiritual energy. Through faith we abide in Him.¹⁵³

To explain the sacrament further, Appasamy employs the concept of Ramanuja, exponent of *Visishtadvaita*, that the created world is the 'body of God.' He says,

The bread and the wine were to become a new body of our Lord. In tasting them we taste His love.... Truly the bread and the wine become the body and blood of our Lord because through them He fulfils His end of making known His love to men and gathering them into the intimacy and closeness of fellowship with Him.¹⁵⁴

Appasamy attempted to build bridges of understanding between the biblical imagery of the Eucharist and the Indian tradition and in the process enriched the Indian Christian understanding of the sacrament.

¹⁵¹ *Christianity as Bhakti Marga* (London: Macmillan, 1927)

¹⁵² *Christianity as Bhakti Marga* (London: Macmillan, 1927) 132.

¹⁵³ *Christianity as Bhakti Marga*, 142, 148. To make the idea clearer in the language of Indian imagery, He also quotes from the Hindu classic *Bhagavat Gita* (XV. 14) where Krishna tells Arjuna "Becoming fire, I inhabit the bodies of creatures and mingling with the life breaths, I digest the four kinds of food." *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ A.J. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage* (London and Madras: SPCK, 1942) 208

Nehemiah Goreh (1825-95), famous convert, intellectual, and theologian, in his book, *On Objections Against the Catholic Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (1868), tells the Indian readers how Christ unites human beings with the Father through his (Christ's) personal gift of his own life. He shows how the Eucharist holds an answer to the yearnings of Hinduism. Goreh says,

He (Christ) as the Mediator between God and men, being one in nature with His Father in His Godhead having taken our flesh, and giving that very flesh to us in the Holy Eucharist, and thus uniting us with himself even in nature through that flesh, though not personally, (we still remain distinct *in person* from Him) but mystically (therefore the Church is wont to call herself His mystical Body) yet really and truly, and through Himself unites us to the Father, yea, makes us 'partakers,' as the Scripture says, 'of the Divine Nature.'¹⁵⁵

Here is another ardent attempt to reach out to the Hindu mind using thought forms that are familiar to the Hindus. These examples show that the Indian theologians struggled with the challenge to interpret the gospel to the people of other faiths.

Inculturation of the liturgy is not an isolated, detached reform in worship that can be entrusted to the so-called 'experts' alone. Rather it is the outcome of the church's experience of sharing in the people's vision for a better world, and its involvement in their struggle for justice and peace. The liturgy of the church must reflect symbols of such participation. The following statement by one of the most indigenised churches in India proves that there are churches, which are conscious of the fact that only a truly 'incultured' church can produce an 'incultured' liturgy. Responding to the section on the Eucharist in the Lima text the General Council of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar stated:

We feel the Indian church must work increasingly towards becoming genuinely Indian and participate in the efforts to eradicate illiteracy, ill health, and exploitation so that these efforts become the signs of the Kingdom of God in the present times. We acknowledge that the Mar Thoma Church needs to transcend its predominantly middle-class identity in order to achieve this end. Our prayer is that the power of the Spirit will challenge the Church in this direction.¹⁵⁶

Here a church conceives of inculturation of the church as a process of addressing the issues of the people by means of its spiritual and material resources. The same approach holds true in the case of liturgical inculturation; it will happen only when the liturgy reflects the real

¹⁵⁵ Cited by Robin Boyd in *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, revised edition, (Delhi: ISPCK and Trivandrum: Indian Theological Library, 1994) 53-54.

¹⁵⁶ Mar Thoma Sabha Council, "Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar," in *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry" Text, Vol. IV*, Faith and Order Paper 137, ed. Max Thurian (Geneva: W. C. C., 1987) 10.

life and issues of the people and responds to them positively by bringing the church's faith to bear on them.

1.7. Conclusion:

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the main assumptions that underlie the concept of the Eucharist in this research. The Eucharist is a ritual statement of the church's faith and experience of salvation. It is the salvation-story in dramatic form. The Eucharist is an epitome of the Gospel and a ritualised creedal articulation; it is the expression of the church's christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, missiology, and other articulations of theology. It is the medium of the Church's proclamation of God's saving activity in the world. It is true that liturgy is a product of the church; but at the same time the church is a product of the liturgy.

For the Christian, the Eucharist is the primary means to express his or her constant dependence on God, to listen to God's voice and to receive God's strength. It enables one to live the life that Christ has offered, a life of faith that makes everything possible (Mk. 9:23 par.; 11: 22ff. pars.). While discussing the place of the Eucharist in a Christian's life, John Macquarrie says that it "is an effectual sacrament in the sense that it mediates to us the life of Christ, the true vine, life which comes ultimately from the Father as the vinedresser."¹⁵⁷ It is to the great wonder and amazement of the Christian, that the person of Christ himself, the living and reigning Lord, comes close to him or her in the sacrament.

The Eucharist is the 'whole armour of God' for the individual believer (Eph. 6:13); it is his or her equipment for fighting the good fight. The Eucharist provides the occasion to re-examine his or her life in the light of the Christ-event and to rededicate himself or herself to the cause of Christ in this sacrament. In the early days, the word *sacramentum* denoted a military pledge of loyalty to the emperor; so is the Eucharist a pledge of loyalty to God our strength and redeemer. The implications of sacramental living are many: it means meeting one's needs in faith, living at peace with oneself by fighting evil within oneself, living at peace with one's neighbour by fighting evil in the society and in the environment, and living in communion with God in time and eternity.

¹⁵⁷ *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: S.C.M. Books, 1997) 121.

One expects a sound liturgy of the Eucharist today to assert the Kingdom values that Christ proclaimed. It will involve the laity as prime actors in the Eucharistic action, and aim for the transformation of the whole people of God. It will bring the church face to face with the everyday life and problems of the people inside and outside the church. It will draw in the stories of the people and align them with the great drama of salvation which is unfolded in the Bible and is in the process of being brought to its dazzling climax by the suffering and triumphant Son of God and the sanctifying Holy Spirit. It will spell out the great story in a language and idiom that is familiar to the local community.

Liturgy has to become part and parcel of the living culture of the local people, and conversely, the living culture should become part and parcel of the liturgy; that is what inculturation implies. But the best evidences of inculturation of the liturgy and of the church are to be sought in the life and witness of the local community of the faithful. It is when it enjoys close communion with the Lord of salvation, and actively engages in loving, serving, and doing justice among the lowliest and the lost ones within the church and outside that its integration with the local community and its culture becomes ideal. For such is the character of a living Church and of a living liturgy. How far does the liturgical pattern of the Church of South India reflect these insights?

Chapter Two

THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA: ENVISIONING RENEWAL

A change of rubrics can produce liturgical reform; only a change of heart can produce liturgical renewal.

--W.J. Grisbrooke¹

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the nature of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper as a worship of thanksgiving that expresses the church's gratefulness for God's gracious gift of salvation through Christ and personal communion with God through the Holy Spirit. The church's liturgy must enable the whole body of worshippers, both the clergy and the laity, to participate actively and meaningfully in worship. It is desired that in the dramatic, edifying experience of the eucharistic worship, the people of God may be inspired and transformed by the Spirit of God to engage in their mission in the world. Does the liturgy of the Church of South India encourage the worshippers to enjoy this fellowship with God and to engage in God's mission? If it does not, what will bring about a liturgical renewal in the CSI?

In a sense a living liturgy is the language of the church. As Leslie Brown says, "Liturgy is primarily the means by which God is believed to communicate with his people and to speak his word; it is also the response of God's people to what he says."² A church is known by its liturgy, rather than by its edifices. For the liturgy is the culture of a living church, its creed, its proclamation, and its music. A living liturgy must continually articulate the church's response to the changes that take place in the society.

The Church of South India has a well-made liturgy that has imbibed the insights of the liturgical movement in the West. Reciprocally the CSI liturgy has made its own contributions to liturgical reform in many parts of the world. But today the CSI stands in need of a liturgical resurgence. Much water has flowed under the bridge since 1950 when

¹ W.J. Grisbrooke, "Liturgical Reform and Liturgical Renewal," *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991) 154.

² L.W. Brown, *Relevant Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1965) 4.

the first liturgy of the new united church came into existence. But in the course of the church's history, the liturgy has failed to respond to the changes in the social and cultural milieu or within the church. It has not responded sufficiently to the fresh insights of the liturgical movement. In this chapter the discussion of the need for liturgical renewal in the CSI is based on an evaluation of the church's present pattern of eucharistic worship.

The first part of this chapter contains an appraisal of the three eucharistic liturgies of the church. It is followed by a description of a study conducted in the four dioceses of the CSI in Kerala to understand the place of the liturgy in the life of the church and its members. The last part of the chapter sets down some guiding principles for liturgical reform in the CSI.

2.2. Worship in the Church of South India

2.2.1. Introduction

On 27th September 1947, the united church, the Church of South India was inaugurated, creating a new chapter in ecumenical history. The union achieved what was hitherto an impossible dream elsewhere in the Christendom, the first ever union of Episcopal and non-Episcopal churches. The churches that joined the union, at the end of negotiations that lasted 28 years, were the Anglican Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon in South India; the South India province of the Methodist Church; the South India United Church (which itself was born of a union between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches); and Basel Mission (Swiss Reformed). The founders of the Church of South India saw exciting possibilities for the new church in independent India.

After half a century of its existence, the CSI is still a growing church. It has a remarkable record of church attendance; most of its places of worship are packed to capacity on Sundays with men, women and children in their Sunday best. They are keen worshippers who like to sing, pray and to listen to the Word of God together. CSI is a Bible-teaching church that accords great importance to the reading and exposition of the Word of God.

The large majority of the members of the CSI live in the villages of South India. They belong to the low middle class and to the Dalit and tribal populations. They have their problems and hardships. Many of them belong to the most exploited sections of the Indian society. But they are a religious people and they live among people of other religions and

ideologies. It is these people who crowd the churches on Sundays and other days of worship to pray to God and to receive his blessings upon their lives.

2.2.2. The Three Eucharistic Liturgies of the CSI

The CSI has three orders of eucharistic worship. They are the *Order for the Lord's Supper*, which after initial revisions was first approved by the Synod in 1950 (and finally revised in 1979), the Revised Version of 1971, and the Alternate Version of 1985.³

2.2.2.1. *The Order for the Lord's Supper* (1950/1979)⁴

Even before the united church came into existence, schemes for the worship of the new church were on the anvil. In 1946, the Continuation Committee of the Joint Committee on Union appointed an *ad hoc* group consisting of members from the uniting churches to prepare orders of worship urgently needed for the new church in the initial stage. The group was entrusted with the task of preparing orders of worship for the Consecration of Bishops and the Ordination of Presbyters and Deacons. These forms of service were authorised to be used by the new church until it developed its own orders of service. The above mentioned *ad hoc* group was also asked to prepare an order of service for the Inauguration of the Church of South India; the order of service they prepared matched the importance of the historical event.⁵

In 1948, the first Synod of the CSI, which met at Madurai, appointed a liturgy committee with Rev. L.W. Brown (C.M.S. missionary and theological educator who became later the Archbishop of Uganda) as its convenor. Most of the members came from the *ad hoc* group, which prepared the above-mentioned initial orders of worship. In February 1949 the Synod Executive asked the liturgy committee to formulate a new liturgy for the church.⁶ The committee immediately set to action. It was firm about the need to adhere to the stipulations of the Constitution of the CSI about the worship of the church. The CSI had envisioned in

³ There is, in addition, a shorter version of the Lord's Supper in the CSI *Book of Common Worship*. But it may not need a separate appraisal since it is only a condensed *Order for the Lord's Supper* of 1950 and it follows the same order. But some prayers and passages have been removed and the Apostle's Creed has replaced the Nicene Creed. This is for use in short celebrations of the Eucharist.

⁴ Church of South India, *The Book of Common Worship*, second edition (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1979; second impression, 1983) 1-20.

⁵ Marcus Ward, *The Pilgrim Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1950) 128.

⁶ S.M. Gibbard, "Liturgical Life in the Church of South India: the Book of Common Worship in Practice," *Studia Liturgica* 3 (1964) 194.

Chapter 10 of its Constitution “a common form or forms of the Service of Holy Communion adapted to the special needs and religious experience of South India” and set down in outline form the structure of the liturgy it desired.⁷ The committee was aware that it had to take into account the needs and the sensibilities of the constituent churches. At the same time the committee also wanted to pick up the new insights of the liturgical movement that was gathering momentum in the West. In his article, “The Making of a Liturgy,” Bishop L.W. Brown narrates the story of the birth of the CSI liturgy.⁸ According to him, the foremost concern of the first liturgy committee was to be “faithful to the Scriptures” in the language and format of the liturgy.⁹ Secondly, it wanted the liturgy to be the major worship service of the church, “an act of the whole people of God;” the service must provide for good lay participation.¹⁰ A third concern was to preserve the favourite features of the worship of the partner churches.¹¹

The committee did marvellous work with remarkable speed and efficiency considering the fact that much of the work of the committee was done through correspondence.¹² The first draft was sent to all the dioceses of the CSI and to scholars in the missionary mother churches. Revisions were made on the basis of comments received. After several revisions, the final draft of the *An Order for the Lord's Supper or The Holy Eucharist* was ready in December 1949. It was used in the Synod of 1950, which gladly approved it “for optional and experimental use on special occasions” in the church. The Synod allowed a two-year

⁷ Chapter X, Rule 2: ‘The Worship of the Church,’ *The Constitution of the Church of South India* (Madras: CLS, 1952; reprint, 1963). See also T. S. Garrett, *The Liturgy of the Church of South India* (London: O. U. Press, 1952) x.

⁸ L.W. Brown, “The Making of a Liturgy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4 (1951) 55-63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹² Rajaiah D. Paul who has served the CSI as its honorary General Secretary for several years has remarked that the Church was fortunate to have on its Liturgy Committee such eminent liturgists as Rev. Leslie Brown (later Archbishop of Uganda), Rev. J.R. Macphail (who succeeded Rev. Brown as the Convenor of the Liturgy Committee), Rev. H.K. Moulton, Rev. T.S. Garrett (later Bishop), and the Revds. G.S. Azariah, E.L. Anantha Rao, E. Tychicus and Canon Thomas Sittther. See Rajaiah D. Paul. *The First Decade: an Account of the CSI* (Madras: CLS, 1958) 131.

Among the other members of the first and the second Synod Liturgy Committees, not mentioned by R.D. Paul, were Bishop A.G. Jebaraj, Revds. D. Thambusami, S. Selvaratnam, and Prof. P.A. Thangasamy. Corresponding members of the second Liturgy Committee were the following: Rt. Revds. C.K. Jacob, J.E.L. Newbiggin, A.J. Appasamy, L.W. Brown, Revds. E.L. Anantha Rao, G.S.C. Azariah, David Chellappa, George Devadoss, W. Elphick, A. Ezekiel, C.B. Firth, A.T. Hanson, V.T. Kurien, H.W.S. Page, H.A. Popley, T. Sittther, E. Tychicus, A.M. Ward, Deaconess Carol Graham, and Sri C. Arangaden. Corresponding members though they had the right to attend the meetings were expected to do so at their own expense. (Minutes of the Synod Liturgy Committee 1948-'54, United Theological College Archives, Bangalore, India).

period for comments and criticisms from the dioceses.¹³ It was in accordance with Chapter 10, section 5 of the Constitution, which enjoins the presbyters to consult the congregations and implement new orders of worship only with their approval. The liturgy was subsequently translated into the four South Indian languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. In 1952, the Synod felt that the new liturgy was not sufficiently known in the church and gave it another two years for experimental use. Meanwhile Rev. L.W. Brown who was appointed as the Bishop of Uganda left and Rev. J.R. Macphail was appointed the Convenor of the Synod Liturgy Committee. In 1953, the liturgy was further revised. The Synod of January 1954 gave the liturgy the final approval “for general use wherever it is desired.”¹⁴

The liturgy of the CSI drew the attention of the world church. It was acclaimed as a milestone in the liturgical movement. It marked a clear improvement upon the Anglican liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer* (or, *BCP*) of 1662/1928 to which it owes its basic pattern. The salient features of the CSI liturgy were the clarity of structure, the centrality accorded to the proclamation of the Word, the accent on the Resurrection of Christ and the victory of God, the emphasis on the active participation of the congregation, and above all the atmosphere of joy, freedom, and fellowship.

The CSI liturgy contained the riches of the church’s liturgical heritage. They included such great prayers like the Gregorian Collect for Purity, the *Gloria*, the prayer for the Church Militant, the *Sursum Coda*, the *Sanctus*, the *Agnus Dei*, the Prayer of Humble Access from the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Confession (adapted), and the Prefaces (except two, which are from the *BCP*) from the *Book of Common Order*. Some prayers were borrowed from the Liturgy of St James used by the Orthodox tradition of Malabar; they are the second litany, the *Benedictus*, the prayers of response during the Great Thanksgiving Prayer (“Amen. Thy death, O Lord, we commemorate,” etc., and “We give thanks to thee, etc.”). The Great Thanksgiving Prayer was borrowed from the Apostolic Liturgy of Hippolytus; it was followed by the prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer* “with its very strong emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.” It was felt that such an emphasis was “much needed in India with its background of Hindu sacrificial ideas.”¹⁵

¹³ L.W. Brown, “The Making of a Liturgy,” 57.

¹⁴ T.S. Garrett, *Worship in the Church of South India* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 18. See also J.R. Macphail, “Doing Over a Liturgy,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954) 376.

¹⁵ L.W. Brown, *Three Worlds, One World* (London: Rex Collings, 1981) 77.

The Offertory Prayer echoes the Prayer of the Veil of the Liturgy of St. James. One of the forms used at the Fraction, “The things of God for the people of God,” also comes from the Orthodox tradition. A prayer that has appealed to people all over was taken from the Mozarabic liturgy. It is the beautiful prayer for the presence that follows the offertory prayer beginning, “Be present, be present, Jesus thou good high priest....” It has found its way into several subsequent liturgies.¹⁶

The liturgy is celebrated with the minister facing the people. It is the revival of an ancient tradition of the Church.¹⁷ This practice in the CSI is said to have been copied by liturgical reformers around the world.¹⁸ The “Kiss of Peace” is adapted from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Communion by ‘tables’ is practised in the Methodist and Reformed traditions.

A Short Order for the Lord's Supper was also prepared for use on occasions when it is not convenient to use the full form. It has abbreviated versions of the Preparation and the Ministry of the Word but there is no change in the Breaking of the Bread.

An Order for the Lord's Supper took many years to replace the denominational liturgies and worship styles in the different dioceses. According to Macphail, ten years after the union, at the sixth biennial Synod which met in Nagercoil in 1958, the Moderator, Bishop Sumitra stated that by then only eight of the fourteen dioceses of the CSI were using the new liturgy of the united church.¹⁹

In *Renewal and Advance*, which is a report of the CSI Commission on Integration and Joint Action, it is stated as follows:

The C.S.I. Order for the Lord's Supper is very widely used – in some congregations always, in others alternating with the old forms occasionally. It is usually used at representative gatherings such as Diocesan Council meetings and Diocesan Conferences and retreats, and is in regular use in the Theological Seminaries. Several settings of it to Indian Music have been made, though these are not widely

¹⁶ H. Boone Peter has written an interesting article on the possible origins of this prayer and its influence in the liturgical world following its inclusion in the CSI liturgy. See, “Be Present, Be Present,” *Studia Liturgica* 21 (1991) 155-164.

¹⁷ Rev. Brown indicates in his biography, that the immediate cause for this rubric was the protest of a student of his at K.U.T. Seminary, Trivandrum who was a Hindu convert. The student found the eastward position an objectionable idolatrous practice; for to him it appeared that the minister, Rev. Brown, was worshipping the cross on the wall! He did not leave an idolatrous religion, he said, to embrace another. So he refused to take part in the communion services. Rev. Brown says that it was to assuage his “recalcitrant Hindu convert” that he started celebrating the Eucharist facing the people and incorporated it in the rubric of the new liturgy. See *Three Worlds, One Word*, 67-68, 78.

¹⁸ L.W. Brown, *Three Worlds, One Word*, 68.

¹⁹ See his article, “Worship in the Church of South India,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964) 25.

known.... But there are some urban congregations and considerable rural areas where it is still unknown.²⁰

The Order for the Lord's Supper went through two more editions. The second edition was authorised by the Synod for general use in January 1962. It contained no changes but for minor changes in the wording of rubrics. A third edition was authorised in 1979. Changes were made in the litanies of Intercession to reflect the conciliar fellowship into which the CSI had entered with the Church of North India and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Intercessions now included prayer for the councils and heads of these three churches and for greater unity and fellowship among these churches. Prayers for the Prime Minister, and the Governor and the Chief Minister of the state were also included.

It has taken decades for a large number of congregations in many dioceses to accept the *Order for the Lord's Supper*. The CSI Constitution expressly forbids the imposition of any particular order of worship upon the congregations.²¹ But, had there been concrete and sustained efforts to popularise the liturgy at the parish level, many congregations would have readily accepted this order of worship. The introductory book on the liturgy of the CSI written by Rev. T.S. Garrett in 1952²² has been of immense help to presbyters and lay workers.

An appraisal:

The merits of the Order for the Lord's Supper (1950/1979):

Marcus Ward, who was an active member of the Liturgy Committee, was full of appreciation for the new liturgy; he has given his reasons in his book on the first five years of the CSI.²³ First of all, he says, the new liturgy is "comprehensive;" it is faithful to the apostolic tradition and at the same time it draws freely from the Church's varied traditions. It is comprehensive also in the sense of the equal importance it awards to the Word and the Sacrament. It also combines elements that are ancient and modern, evangelical and catholic, of the East and the West; it pleases the villager and the academic alike. Secondly, he says, it is "congregational;" it is a liturgy, which encourages the active participation of the whole

²⁰ *Renewal and Advance: Report of the CSI Commission on Integration and Joint Action* (Madras: CLS, 1963) 43.

²¹ Chapter 2, section 12.

²² T.S. Garrett, *The Liturgy of the CSI: an Introduction to and Commentary on the Service of the Lord's Supper* (Madras: O U P, 1952).

²³ Ward, *The Pilgrim Church*, 134-135.

congregation. Thirdly, it is "Indian in character;" it has features showing marked affinity to Indian spirituality and ways of devotion.

Another admirer of the CSI liturgy was Rajaiah D. Paul, who was an honorary General Secretary of the Synod. He mentions three parts of the CSI eucharistic service that never failed to touch his heart. They were the Peace, the corporate Prayer for the Presence beginning, "Be present, be present," and the acclamation during the Great Thanksgiving Prayer, beginning "Amen. Thy death, O Lord, we commemorate."²⁴

J.R. Macphail, the second Convenor of the Liturgy Committee, hails the CSI liturgy as a "comprehensive service." He says,

It tries to bring together Anglican tenderness, Methodist warmth, and the solemn mirth of the Reformation. John 17 is its charter, but it finds its rule of thumb in I Corinthians 3. The individual and the institution, personal experience and tradition, freedom and order, grace and faith, Eastern and Western, Anglican and Calvinist and Wesleyan.... Nothing lopsided or blown up, nothing whittled down or crowded out; everything in proportion, and in order.... The stages and movements are marked off clearly, and yet each modulates into the next without a jerk.²⁵

These comments are not unfounded. It has a simplicity and strength that warms the hearts of the worshippers. Some of the salient features of the CSI liturgy are listed below:

- i. *The CSI liturgy has a strong scriptural tone.* As mentioned earlier, the primary principle of the Liturgy Committee was to develop a liturgy, which was close to the language and faith of the Scriptures.²⁶ Gibbard mentions particularly the equal importance that has been given in the liturgy to the readings from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. He also points out the Scriptural references and allusions all over the liturgy, especially evident in the Preface and in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving,²⁷
- ii. *It has sound theological emphases.* The CSI liturgy emphasizes the Lord's Supper as a service of thanksgiving for and memorial of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It commemorates the covenant and reconciliation that God has

²⁴ R.D. Paul, *The First Decade: An Account of the CSI*, 134.

²⁵ J.R. Macphail, "Worship in the Church of South India," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964): 30-31.

²⁶ See above, sec. 2.2.2.1.

²⁷ Gibbard points out especially the reference to the creation in the Preface and the concrete references to the life of Christ in the Anaphora. See, "Liturgical Life in the CSI," 198. See also *The Book of Common Worship*, 15-18.

initiated in Christ. The purpose is to bring reconciliation with God and with one another in the human community. The Eucharist is also thanksgiving and anticipation for the consummation of the Kingdom of God at the Parousia.

- iii. *The accent is on the active participation of the people.* The intention of the formulators of this liturgy was to promote the corporate nature of the church's worship. The Introduction to the *Order for the Lord's Supper* says, "The Liturgy is intended for use as the Sunday morning service of the whole congregation, not as an extra service for a small section."²⁸ The following measures have been introduced to encourage lay participation:
 - a. The president of the Eucharist faces the congregation ('the basilican position' of the early church).²⁹ It represents the presence of God in the midst of the eucharistic assembly.
 - b. The congregation joins in the worship all the time by means of frequent oral responses. Such responses are made especially during the prayers of Intercession, Offertory, The Great Thanksgiving (Anaphora) and the final prayer of Thanksgiving. The liturgy provides for lay persons to lead all parts of the worship marked for 'deacons.' The Introduction to *Order for the Lord's Supper* mentions that "it is desirable laymen [i.e. laypersons] should always take part in the conduct of the service."³⁰
- iv. *Alternate forms of prayers:* The prayers of Adoration, Intercession, and Thanksgiving have alternate forms, which contribute to variety in worship. There are also an array of Prefaces and a separate collect for each Sunday.³¹
- v. *The Peace greeting* is a fine expression of reconciliation in the family of God. This is an adaptation of a practice in the Orthodox liturgical tradition. It

²⁸ CSI, *An Order for the Lord's Supper*, revised edition (Madras: OUP, 1954; reprint, 1960) iii.

²⁹ It is believed that *missa versus populum* (The Mass facing the assembly) gave way to *missa versus orientum* (The Mass facing the east) by the end of the fourth century. The former was originally preferred because it copied the position of Christ as he sat, or rather reclined, facing the disciples at the Last Supper. But, according to Jaime Lara, there is ample evidence to show that right from the first century Christians especially in the eastern Mediterranean world, faced east while praying – they would pray toward Jerusalem or toward the rising sun, "as symbol of awaiting the second advent of Christ, the Sun of justice." See Jaime Lara, "Versus Populum Revisited," *Worship* 68 (1994) 210-221.

³⁰ *An Order of the Lord's Supper*, 1960, iii.

³¹ Now the CSI lectionary has three cycles of collects and sets of readings.

expresses and reinforces the unity of the worshippers in the presence of God. It breaks the formality of the worship service and encourages worshippers to greet one another in a spirit of reconciliation and mutual forgiveness. The beauty of the rite is seen in its symbolic relationship with the Offertory. The Introduction refers to "Augustine's teaching that the sacrifice we offer is our unity in Christ."³²

- vi. *There are periods of silence.* Periods of silence are a feature of worship in many Indian religions. The three periods of silence and possibilities for more are intended to enable the worshipping congregation to enjoy the presence of God in the beauty of holiness, to feel the strength of community at worship, to put their anxieties to rest, and to wait upon God in faith and hope. Silence is kept before the prayer of Confession, before the Absolution, and before the Prayer of Humble Access.
- vii. *The Sermon follows the Scripture readings.* The intention is that the Sermon should throw light on the readings and may enable the congregation to assert its faith in the creedal statement that immediately follows.
- viii. *The Anamnesis and Epiclesis exhibit a clear structure.* The neat structure of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving is especially evident in the anamnesis of God's work of salvation in Christ and in the invocation of the Holy Spirit.
- ix. *The liturgy is celebrated in an atmosphere of joyfulness and celebration.* The tenor of the CSI liturgy is praise and thanksgiving. From the start to finish the liturgy resounds with joyful notes of Christ's victory articulated in frequent references to the Resurrection and the Parousia; this is in marked contrast to the solemnity of the *BCP* which seemed to dwell more on the passion and death of Christ.
- x. Other remarkable features of the CSI liturgy include the Confession that is incorporated in the early part of the worship, the Scriptural and beautiful prayers like the Offertory prayer and the prayer for Christ's presence, communion by 'tables', the 'bold clear framework' of the lectionary based on the three great festivals of Christmas, Pentecost and Easter.

³² *An Order of the Lord's Supper*, 1960, vii.

The demerits:

- i. *The CSI liturgy does not overcome the verbosity of the BCP.* The prayer of the Great Thanksgiving (“his one oblation once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,” etc.), and the final prayers of Thanksgiving are theologically ‘overloaded.’ Such sentence structures serve but to irritate the ears and clutter the mind, rather than to engender comprehension. The language of the liturgy needs to be ‘worshipper-friendly.’
- ii. *The salutation, Benedictus qui venit, seems to be out of place* coming after the *Sanctus*. It seems to break the connection with the first words of the Great Thanksgiving.³³
- iii. *The sudden shift from the Ministry of the Word to the Breaking of the Bread is not convenient* and it mars the sequence. The change of mood from Intercession at the end of the section on the Ministry of the Word to the Peace and Offertory at the beginning of the Breaking of the Bread is rather abrupt and jerky. It is even inconsiderate to the worshippers who have to change from a kneeling position (often on the floor) to a standing position.
- iv. The jubilation and the vibrancy of the celebration seem to reach their climax in the ‘boldness’ of the Lord’s Prayer, but the two prayers that follow, viz: *the Prayer of Humble Access and the Agnus Dei, seem to be out of place* here and anticlimactic in effect.
- v. *The liturgy sadly is not ‘Indian’* in the real sense of that word. Some members of the Liturgy Committee were aware of the fact, and they sincerely hoped that it would have Indian features in due course, when the church became truly integrated as a united church, mature in faith and witness.³⁴ The emphasis on the praise aspect, the periods of silence, and the Peace were considered as congenial to the Indian spirit of worship.³⁵ There is also a problem with the style of

³³ According to Garrett, a suggestion made to the Liturgy Committee at some stage to move it to the place just before the Communion, was not accepted for some reason. See Garrett, *The Liturgy of the CSI*, 89.

³⁴ Brown, “Making of a Liturgy,” 57.

³⁵ In his farewell message to the CSI, Leslie Brown said,

We also ought to look for the day when the Church will no longer think in the western forms which it has received but will find a truly Indian expression of its worship, resting upon the great biblical tradition of the universal Church. It is of the greatest importance that the

language; it is written in chaste English, but the flowery, lyrical prayers in English language seem to have lost their beauty and much of their import when translated into South Indian languages.³⁶ This danger could have been avoided by using Indian prayers because Indian languages have comparable idiomatic structure. One is reminded of the great prayers and prayer hymns of N.V. Tilak, Mosa Walsalam Sastriyar, and numerous others and one wonders why none of them could find a place in the liturgy.

- vi. On the whole, the CSI liturgy *promotes an individualistic and otherworldly religious attitude*. There is precious little to encourage a sense of community in this liturgy, saving the gesture of Peace and the communion in tables. The liturgy does not provide much scope for interaction among the worshippers.
- vii. Today it is generally agreed that *the lack of emphasis upon the social task of the church* is a grave defect in any liturgy. Apart from a bidding in the prayer of Intercession there is no particular mention of areas of human needs in the liturgy. The bidding: "... for the salvation of *our souls*, let us pray to the Lord" does not sound well. Although the word "souls" could mean "persons," it may be mistaken as referring to the "spirit" as distinct from the body, as the translations into regional languages indicate.

liturgical expression of the Church's response to God should come from the worshipping Church itself and be the expression of her experience rather than the invention of leaders with an interest in and a gift for liturgical expression.

See Ward, *The Pilgrim Church*, 136.

³⁶ The following is an old letter. Commenting on a draft of the present liturgy, Rev. Markus Barth of Bubendorf wrote to Rev. L. W. Brown, convenor of the liturgy committee:

The language of the 16th and 17th centuries is a problematic thing even in Europe. Is it a good and advisable to put this burden again on the shoulders of a comparatively young church? I have been looking for some particularly Indian features of the Liturgy – not for the sake of preservation of folkloristic peculiarities but simply because there can be no Christian or ecclesiastical 'straight waist-coat.' But I have not found anything reminiscent of India to show us: this is how in India the Gospel is accepted and believed....

(Unpublished letter of Markus Barth of Bubendorf to Rev. Leslie W. Brown, dated 8th September 1949. (UTC Archives, Bangalore. This letter is mentioned by Rev. Brown in his article, "The Making of a Liturgy," 56-57.).

But no one is as conscious of the need for the inculturation of the CSI liturgy as its main architect, Bishop Leslie Brown himself who in a personal letter wrote, "I am entirely in favour of the Indians revising the CSI liturgy because I knew it was written by some of us who are not native Indians, only by adoption! I think the Malayalees or Tamils ought to write a new liturgy in their own language, using all its figures of speech and then translate it into English...." (Personal letter of Bishop Leslie Brown to this researcher dated 25th May 1997).

Nevertheless, appreciation must overtake criticism when one assesses the difficult task that was shouldered by the formulators of the CSI liturgy and takes into account the circumstances that gave birth to the same. They were faithful to the Constitution of the CSI, sensitive to the needs of the constituents of the united church, and open to the liturgical tradition of the universal church. They brought together all their scholarship and spiritual experience to give shape to a wonderful liturgy. It must be appreciated that the Committee had thrown open its doors to a large number of correspondents and consultants from around the world; it was also willing to listen to suggestions and comments and to make changes where necessary. The members of the CSI are ever obligated to the formulators of the *Order for the Lord's Supper* for their lasting contribution.

2.2.2.2. *The Revised Version (1971)*³⁷

In 1971, the Synod Liturgy Committee prepared a shorter and simplified version of the liturgy in plain English, which was approved by the Synod Executive "for experimental use wherever desired," in September 1971. It was also translated into regional languages. But it has not become very popular.

An appraisal:

The merits of the Revised Version:

This version uses lucid, down-to-earth language and short and expressive phrases. It has many other positive features: For example, an alternate form of absolution; several forms of offertory sentences; a shorter final thanksgiving; a mission benediction, and so on. The *Benedictus* and the Prayer of Humble Access have been removed not just for the sake of brevity but most probably because their positions in the liturgy were found to be unsuitable. It has removed the ambiguity of some phrases in the *Order for the Lord's Supper* (1954). For example, the words in the Absolution, "... and bring you to eternal life" have been changed to "... and keep you in life eternal." The opening bidding in the second Litany of Intercession, "For the peace that is from above, and for the salvation of our souls" has been altered as, "For peace and justice in the whole world, and for the fullness of life for all men."

³⁷ CSI, *The Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist*, Madras: C.L.S., 1972.

Demerits:

This version appears to be little more than a simplified version of the *Order for the Lord's Supper* (1950). In parts the version seems to be too simple to the point of being simplistic and shallow; this deficiency shows up more blatantly in the translations into the regional languages. Moreover, matter-of fact phrases neither touch the heart nor capture the imagination. The damage done by such paraphrase is especially evident in the Prayer for Purity, the Call to Confession, the Absolution, the concluding prayer of the Intercession, the Offertory Prayer, and the Prayer for the Presence.

3.3. The Alternate Version (1985)³⁸

The first serious and brave attempt to formulate an Indian liturgy for the CSI is to be seen in the Alternate Version published by the Synod Executive for experimental use in October 1985. But this version was formulated neither by the Synod Liturgy Committee, nor by any of its area committees. It is, on the other hand, the work of the staff and students of the "United Theological College, Bangalore, under the chairmanship of Dr Eric Lott, a faculty member."³⁹ It was later adopted and published by the Synod Liturgy Committee, which has authorised it "for occasional use." In the introduction⁴⁰ it is stated that this version "attempts to express an understanding of worship that is more Indian than our traditional Christian worship forms," and it encourages worshippers to "adapt the service to fit local conditions and customs," and to feel free to use local language styles in translations. It also recommends the use of lyrical forms of prayers wherever possible.

3.3.1. *An appraisal*

The merits of the Alternate Version:

This is a radically new liturgy with new prayers composed for the purpose; some of them of exceptional beauty like the Offertory Prayer (p. 13), the 'Redemption Prayer' and the 'Bread Prayer.' The Peace is given a new meaning since it is relocated to follow the absolution. Other changes like the relocation of the Prayer for the Presence to follow the Fraction, and of the Lord's Prayer to sum up the Intercessory Prayers are welcome. There is a conscious

³⁸ Madras: C.L.S., 1985. Also published in *Worship in an Indian Context*, ed. Eric J. Lott (Bangalore: UTC, 1986).

³⁹ See Virginia Kennerley, "The Use of Indigenous Sacred Literature and Theological Concepts in Christian Eucharistic Liturgy in India," *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 147.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

effort to make the church's worship intelligible to its Hindu neighbours. This is done by the inclusion of Sanskrit titles to prayers and rituals, by the use of symbolic Indian signs, symbols, artefacts and attires, and the use of spaces of time for meditation or contemplation, recital of the names of God and the use of Indian music and *bhajans*. The Affirmation of Faith and some of the prayers take note of the Asian reality of poverty and oppression. The alternate version uses inclusive language. Ecological awareness is expressed in references to the divine injunction for the care of the earth (p. 13). The liberation aspects of the salvation are asserted in prayers especially in the Bread Prayer (p. 15). The final blessing is a mission benediction reminding the worshippers of their duty to share the benefits of salvation with their fellow-beings.'

Demerits:

In spite of its many positive features the alternate version has some shortcomings. Although very few Sanskrit words are used, there are other expressions and actions to imitate Hindu worship, which seems to be artificial and far-fetched. It must be pointed out that, to use a phrase of I-to Loh, the 'flaunting of exotic skills' like using Sanskrit, squatting or prostrating on the floor, sprinkling flowers, using Indian oil lamps and incense do not by themselves make an authentic Indian liturgy.⁴¹ Moreover, indigenisation is not 'Hinduisation.' Hindus themselves do not take kindly to Christian 'sacrilegious' attempts to parrot their rituals and to wrest them out of their religious and cultural context. An Indian liturgy must come from Indian congregations, which have assimilated Indian culture in their life and worship, not from the Hindus or Muslims.

The alternate version is not free from wordiness. Crude phrases (e.g. "... to the house of prayer for all people, to the place of awakening to new life," p. 3), long sentences and long prayers may distract and prevent people from feeling and experiencing the mystery of God's presence. Eloquence is a virtue in sermons, but not in prayers. By the same token, it is advisable to omit the Sanskrit and Aramaic ('Maranatha') words, which serve little purpose than to mystify.

A serious deficiency is the absence of any reference to the salvation history in the anaphora.⁴² The witness of the Old Testament is simply overlooked. The expression, "... the

⁴¹ I-to Loh derides such superficial adaptations which are wanting in a sincere appreciation of one's own culture in his article 'Towards Contextualization of Church Music in Asia,' (*Journal of Theology*, IV/1, 1990, 296), quoted by Per Harling, in *Worshipping Ecumenically* (Geneva: W.C.C., 1996) 13.

⁴² Neither is there any mention of India's spiritual history, as Kennerley notes. See K. Virginia Kennerley, "The Use of Indigenous Sacred Literature and Theological Concepts in Christian

divine spirit, the living God within us” in the Entry part, which presupposes the divine indwelling in human lives, sounds a jarring note, for it may not be an experience common to all the worshippers, not at least at the beginning of the worship. The expression even seems to be an echo of the *advaita* dictum *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*).

There are minor difficulties with rubrics. For example, there is a different response after each Scripture reading, which is confusing. The Collect seems to be misplaced; it is neither connected to the Sermon nor to the Creed. The collection of the offertory could be more appropriate after the Intercession and the Lord’s Prayer rather than in the place it is assigned to before the Intercession.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the alternate version deserves to be tested out in congregational use in the various dioceses of the CSI to see how people of different backgrounds, spiritual orientations and sensibilities may respond to its format. Further improvements could be made afterwards taking into account the feedback from individuals, congregations and dioceses. Regrettably, this process is being delayed; translations of the new version into the South Indian languages have not yet become popular.

2.3.3. Conclusion

It may be stated without exaggeration that the *Order for the Lord’s Supper* of 1950/54 is the last major contribution to the CSI by the Western missionaries. But the CSI has not done much to build upon the foundations laid by the missionary liturgists. There have been very few significant and effective liturgical reforms in the CSI in the past. One may even suspect that liturgical renewal has not been one of the top priorities of the CSI. The church has not taken advantage of the new insights from the liturgical movement. The church has not exploited the wealth of the religious and cultural tradition of the country. It has turned a blind eye even to the abundance of Indian Christian spiritual heritage. There has been little effort to relate the liturgy to the day-to-day concerns and mundane struggles of the people.

The situation calls for some introspection on the part of the church. Nearly half a century has elapsed after the inception of the CSI *Order for the Lord’s Supper*. But has it found acceptance in the Kerala dioceses? Why is there no real motivation for liturgical renewal? Do people find the CSI liturgy satisfactory and helpful? Does it meet the needs of the people? Has it brought unity and integration within the dioceses and congregations? Has it strengthened the mission of the church? Does it motivate the church to participate in the

mission of Christ in a mutinous and mutilated world? To find answers to these and similar questions, it is necessary to observe closely the practice of the Eucharist at the parish level. The next part of this chapter reports such a study.

2.3. A Study of the Practice of the Eucharist in CSI, Kerala

2.3.1. Introduction

What follows is a report of a study conducted in the four dioceses of the Church of South India in Kerala State, seeking to understand the place and influence of the CSI liturgy in the life and mission of the local congregations. The study involved observations of the practice of the Eucharist in a typical parish in each diocese and interviews with parishioners to discover their experiences of the Eucharist.

This study was made in the following representative parishes in the Church of South India in Kerala State:

- i. CSI Congregation, Kannammoola, Trivandrum, South Kerala Diocese
- ii. CSI, St Thomas' Church, Kallely, Madhya Kerala Diocese
- iii. CSI, St George's Church, East Kerala Diocese
- iv. CSI Congregation, Thalap, Kannur, North Kerala Diocese

2.3.2. The objectives

There were three main objectives:

- i. To study the understanding and the experience of the Eucharist among the members of the local congregations in the four Kerala dioceses of the Church of South India;
- ii. to observe the degree of participation by lay members in the eucharistic service; and,
- iii. to assess the influence of the CSI liturgy (*CSI Order for the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist* 1950/1979) in the life and witness of the local congregations.

2.3.3. The methodology

The study was based on participant-observation of the eucharistic worship in selected congregations and on personal interviews with lay persons, which were conducted in a

typical parish in each of the four Kerala dioceses. For this purpose parishes, which are fairly representative of the social and cultural patterns of each of the dioceses, were chosen. The researcher attended the regular eucharistic worship of the congregation after duly obtaining permission from the local presbyter and the parish committee for conducting the study. The arrangements in the church, the atmosphere of the worship, the conduct of the worship, the nature of the participation of the clergy and of the laity, and other details were closely observed. Information about the history of the church and its place in the community, and about the local liturgical practices were collected from the presbyter in charge of the parish and from members of the parish.

As for the personal interviews, ten or more communicant members of the parish (who form roughly ten per cent of the total number of communicant members) were chosen in consultation with the presbyter-in-charge, to be interviewed. The interviewees were selected at random from among the men and women, the young and the old, and from a cross-section of the different social and economic categories in the parish. The interviews were made after the Eucharist, either on the day of worship or on the next day while the impressions were fairly fresh on the mind (The interviewer also had taken part in the Eucharist as a participant-observer). The interviews, which as a rule took place at the homes of the respondents, were based on a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that covered the various aspects of the Eucharist. As a rule, interviews were conducted with individuals. In a few instances couples were interviewed together. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes. The interviews were not recorded on tape as it was found during a pre-testing that it affected the concentration of some respondents. Instead short notes were taken during the interview and detailed reports were made from memory soon afterwards.

In this study, the emphasis was on the nature of the Eucharist as dialogical communication. The Eucharist is a dialogue between God and the church and through the church with the whole of God's creation. It also involves dialogue among the members of the church. In other words, the Eucharist is a communication process. A way to analyze the elements and process of communication is to employ a 'model' of communication. With this aim the questions for the interviews were structured on a modified version of the Harold Laswell's communication model, which has the following elements, namely, Context, Source, Message, Channel, Receiver and Effect.

The Laswell's model (1948) was chosen on account of its clarity and simplicity. Laswell's model was originally formulated to study the process of mass communication. But it is also

used to analyze other modes of human communication. Laswell said that to understand the process of communication, one needs to study the following stages:

“Who
Says what
In which channel
To whom
With what effect?”⁴³

The Laswell model originally included only the following elements, namely, *Source*, *Message*, *Channel*, and *Receiver*. The other two elements were added later: Under which circumstances (the *Context* of Communication)? With what effect (the *Effect* of communication)?

The limitation of the Laswell model is that it may seem to characterize communication as a one-way process, beginning here and ending there, with no provision for a feedback. This is not true to reality since communication is dialogical process. In the Eucharist, God is not only the Source; he is also a Receiver, when he listens to the cries of his people. The congregation not only acts as the Receiver; it is the Source of communication, when it responds to God in faith and joins in the celebration of the Eucharist. The model also may give the impression that communication starts at a point of time and ends at another point of time. This is not true to the dynamics of communication. Communication is an ongoing process. In the case of the Eucharist, for example, the communication between God and his people does not begin at 0930 hours and come to an end at 1100 hours when the minister pronounces the benediction. These limitations of the Laswell model have to be borne in mind.

2.3.4. Church of South India in Kerala State

Kerala is a Malayalam-speaking state on the south-west coast of India. It has a population of 30 million. Its former name “Travancore-Cochin” was changed into Kerala in 1956 when its borders were redrawn following the reorganisation of the states along linguistic lines.

According to tradition, Christianity came to Travancore in the first century. Today in Kerala there are several churches belonging to the Syrian tradition, namely the Malankara Orthodox Church, Jacobite Syrian Church, Mar Thoma Church, Thozhiyoor Church, St. Thomas Evangelical Church and its splinter groups, and Catholic Syro-Malabar. Commonly known

⁴³ See John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 2d ed., (London: Routledge, 1990; reprint, 1993) 30.

as 'the St Thomas Churches of Malabar,' these churches trace their origin to the mission of Apostle St Thomas, who, it is believed, brought Christianity to this land. In the ancient days, the churches of the Syrian Orthodox tradition did integrate well with the culture and socio-political system of Travancore. The Church was liturgical, but not evangelistic. Orthodox Christians believe that it is the liturgy that has enabled the church to survive the tides of change and to preserve its faith and identity in all these centuries.

Mission and evangelism came to the land with the advent of the Protestant Missionaries in the nineteenth century. On the south-western coast, three Protestant missionary societies have laboured, namely the London Missionary in South Travancore, Church Missionary Society in Central Travancore and Cochin, and the Basel Mission in Malabar.

The CSI enjoys cordial relationships with other denominations in Kerala. It is a member of the Kerala Council of Churches. The CSI is in full communion and in conciliar fellowship with the Church of North India and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church.

2.3.5. The Eucharist in the four Kerala dioceses

The Church of South India came into existence in 1947 and the CSI *Order for the Lord's Supper* was authorized for use in the churches by the Synod in 1954.⁴⁴ The Constitution guarantees freedom for the various traditions in the united church to use their own forms of worship as long as they wanted.⁴⁵ But in the course of the past fifty years of common life, almost all of the congregations in the four CSI dioceses in Kerala have given up their traditional eucharistic liturgies in stages and have accepted the CSI liturgy in their place. All dioceses use the CSI orders of service for the ordination of its ministers and the consecration of its bishops. But for other services, the dioceses make use of at least some forms of their own worship (whether traditional or contemporary) along with the CSI orders. The Revised Version (1971) is rarely used. The Alternate version (1985) is not being used in any part of the CSI Kerala. In all the parishes where the observation and the study were conducted *An Order for the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist* (1950/1979) was the form of liturgy in use.

In Kerala, although all dioceses follow the CSI liturgy, there are differences in the way the rubrics are being followed. One purpose of this study was to watch the similarities and

⁴⁴ The orders of the morning and evening worship were published in 1962; the order of Baptism in 1955; the order of Marriage in 1962; and of Burial in 1960.

⁴⁵ *The Constitution of the CSI*, Chapter 2, section 12.

differences in the approach of people in the four dioceses towards the Eucharist. A report of the findings regarding the way it is being celebrated, and of the place and influence of the Eucharist in the life of the people in the four dioceses of the Church of South India in Kerala State is given below.

2.3.5.1. *The Eucharist in the South Kerala Diocese*

a. The history of the diocese:

The origins of the South Kerala Diocese goes back to the work of William Tobias Ringeltaube, a missionary of the London Missionary Society (Congregational), who started the first effective mission in South Travancore in 1806. In 1908, the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church in South India (and in 1919 the Basel Mission) united to form the SIUC. SIUC was one of the constituents of the CSI, which came into existence in 1947. Until 1959, the SKD formed part of the South Travancore Diocese, which then bifurcated to form the South Kerala and the Kanyakumari dioceses. The South Kerala Diocese has a Congregational tradition. The LMS missionaries worked among the oppressed and marginalized people of the South Travancore. The mission fought for the eradication of slave trade, for the social and economic rights of the poor, and for the privileges of oppressed women. The missionary period marks the beginning of a social and spiritual upheaval, which has resulted in the emancipation of large sections of people in the region.⁴⁶

Today the SKD has grown into one of the most active dioceses in the CSI with its 400 parishes, and a large number of educational and social institutions. The majority of the membership belongs to the Nadar community. Dalits form about 20 percent of the total membership.

b. The liturgical tradition:

The SIUC churches were not overly concerned with liturgical texts. In fact they were averse to liturgical worship, and extolled extempore prayer. Therefore worship had a free pattern. Uniformity in the practices of the parishes was insisted on only in the case of the Eucharist.

⁴⁶ See R.N. Yesudas, *The History of the LMS in Travancore: 1806-1908* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1980), J.W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and People's Movements in Kerala* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), and Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989).

Even here the text was limited and consisted of one or two Scripture portions warranting the celebration of the Eucharist. Even after the union and the formation of the CSI South Travancore Diocese, it took many years for the CSI *Order for the Lord's Supper* to become popular. The South Kerala Diocese today uses the CSI liturgy along with its own compositions of morning and evening orders of worship. The worship services in the SKD are characterized by a high degree of lay participation.

c. Church organisation:

Among the four CSI dioceses in Kerala, the South Kerala diocese is the largest and most thriving. The total membership is above 250,000. The diocese is divided into 28 districts, which are the main administrative units. There are 10-20 pastorates in each district. Each pastorate is ministered to either by a presbyter or by a part-time or full-time lay worker who is called an 'evangelist' or 'catechist.' Each pastorate is under the direct administration of district minister (district chairman) and has limited autonomy. Since the majority of the members of the S. K. diocese belong to the Nadar community, they possess a cultural homogeneity on that account. There are a few scattered Dalit pastorates and districts. The northern pastorates belong to Christians from Dalit, Syrian, or Ezhava backgrounds.

South Kerala Diocese is the only diocese in Kerala, which has ordained women as presbyters. But among the five women ministers, only two are in charge of pastorates.

d. Worship in general and the place of the Eucharist:

The South Kerala Diocese (SKD) uses most of the CSI orders of worship in the *Book of Common Worship* including the service of the Eucharist; but it has its own order of service for morning (and evening) service. It came into existence in the seventies and is very similar to the CSI orders of morning and evening worship. There is good lay participation in worship; men, women and children read lessons and lead intercessions.

The Eucharist is celebrated only once a month (usually on the first Sunday) where a presbyter is available and less frequently in parishes where an unordained person is in charge. There is no general practice of celebrating the Eucharist on weekdays or at Christmas or Easter.

The Eucharist is considered to be a worship service of the communicant members and not of the whole body of the baptized members of the church (which includes the children). Children and other non-communicants leave before the Breaking of the Bread, which is

treated as the Eucharist proper. So only a small group remains for the Breaking of the Bread.⁴⁷

e. The celebration of the Eucharist:

The universal adoption of the *CSI Order of the Holy Eucharist* in the diocese has had a positive impact on the pattern of worship in the S K diocese, which has a non-liturgical tradition. In almost all churches a service of preparation for the Sunday service is held either on Fridays or Saturdays, which draws a considerable number of people. If there is a Eucharist at the end of the week, this service is turned into a congregational preparation for the Eucharist.

As mentioned above, only the second part of the Eucharist, that is, the Breaking of the Bread, is treated as the Eucharist proper. So on the Sundays when the Eucharist is going to be celebrated, it is common to hear the ministers make the following announcement during the service: "Today Eucharist will be celebrated *after* the morning worship. So the communicants are requested to stay back to participate in it." Although the *CSI Order for the Lord's Supper* is used, changes are made in the order of service so that the participants are able to mark the conclusion of the morning service and the beginning of the Breaking of the Bread. To this end the offertory is collected soon after the Creed, and the first benediction is pronounced signalling permission for children and other non-communicants to leave. This would almost give the impression that children and non-communicants are being purposely kept away during the Breaking of the Bread. Anyway, many 'communicants' also leave along with the children and the non-communicants! The outcome is that in almost all churches just a handful of people stay back to take part in the Breaking of the Bread. Great harm is done to the idea of the Eucharist by treating the Eucharist as a ritual for the seniors where the children and others have no place. The saddest part is that the worship, which has to reach its climax in the Breaking of the Bread by the presence and participation of the whole community of the faithful, tends to fade out unceremoniously, bereft of any liveliness or enthusiasm.

The worship services are distinctively informal. Although the CSI liturgy is used, ministers do not stick to the rubrics but make all kinds of changes in the order of service to suit local practices. The CSI lectionary is followed, but the collects for the Sundays are not usually

⁴⁷ The rubric at the end of the first part says, "Those who leave shall leave now." It is not intended to ward off non-communicants. On the other hand, it means just that those who want to leave may leave now rather than in the middle of the next part. This is to guard the solemnity of the service and to

used. There is no general practice of using the liturgical colours. There is good singing. Chanting of the liturgy is not favoured. The Peace greeting is not practised; possibly it is being shunned probably as a reaction on account of its association with the Eastern churches. There is fairly good lay participation (of both men and women); deacons, deaconesses and others read the lessons including the Gospel lesson. Lay leaders may lead intercessory prayers and make announcements during the services. But this kind of participation is very much limited to the first part of the service.

The Congregationalist believed in the preponderance of the Word over the sacrament; the presbyter is primarily the preacher of the Word, rather than the celebrant of the Eucharist. This approach has found its expression in church architecture. In most of the church buildings in the diocese, the pulpit adorns the front and centre of the chancel. The holy table usually stands on a lower level in front of the pulpit. Many new churches also have adopted the same design of the chancel which means that the S.K. diocese is following the SIUC tradition which accords the Ministry of the Word priority over the Breaking of the Bread. Very few churches have communion rails. Usually makeshift arrangements are made after the first benediction to help people to receive communion by kneeling around the holy table or beside the pews.

In this diocese, either ordinary bread or wafers are used as communion elements. Individual cups are used for the wine. The deacons assist the minister in making arrangements for the communion and in administering it.

The communicants usually make a second offertory before or after receiving communion. The choir sings hymns during the administration to contribute to the solemnity of the atmosphere. There is a widespread practice of recording the attendance of the communicants.

f. The Eucharist at the CSI Church, Kannammoola:

This is a friendly and welcoming congregation on the outskirts of the Trivandrum City pastored by a resident minister. The church has a mixed congregation of members belonging to different social communities and social and economic categories but there is no discrimination on any basis and instead there are exceptionally good relations among the people. People of other denominations and other faiths also attend this church. The church has 120 communicants.

preserve the bond of eucharistic fellowship.

Unlike most of the other churches in the diocese, the Kannammoola church has an *Anglican* design since an Anglican missionary designed it. The building has a cruciform structure. The congregation is seated almost on three sides of the chancel, as there are pews in the transepts as well. This promotes a sense of togetherness. The holy table stands in a central place on the raised ground of the chancel and the pulpit and the lectern stand on its either sides. As the communion rails are semi-circular in shape, the communicants kneel on three sides of the holy table. Wafers are used. Wine is distributed in individual cups, as it is the practice in the S.K. Diocese.

The Eucharist is celebrated on the first Sundays of every month in this church. Children and teenagers leave after the first part of the service. But as a rule almost all of the other communicant members who were present in the first part of the worship (numbering 80-120) stay on for the Breaking of the Bread. On the Sunday under observation, 105 people stayed back to take part in the Eucharist and to receive communion.

The Eucharist was conducted according to the *Order of Lord's Supper* (1979). There was no procession or recession, which seems to be outside the Congregational practice. Therefore no Little Entrance or Great Entrance. The Bible was on the lectern and the communion elements were on the holy table already at the beginning of the service. A choir led the singing. Laymen read all the three lessons. In the place of the collect the minister prayed an extempore prayer. A member of the church committee ('deacon') led the Intercession. He introduced the topics for prayer after which he prayed an extempore prayer. A good number of the congregation stayed on for the Breaking of the Bread. They participated attentively and many were following the order of service in the *CSI Book of Common Worship*. Others were able to say many of the responses from memory. The majority of those who stayed back received the communion, which was administered 'in tables.' They offered alms (a second, special offertory for the Eucharist) in the offertory plate kept near the rails. The 'deacons' helped the minister with the arrangements for the communion.

g. Survey on People's Experiences of the Eucharist: a summary of responses⁴⁸

In the light of the interviews, which were conducted at this fairly representative parish in the South Kerala Diocese, it was found that the communicant members attached great significance to the Eucharist and were keen to participate in it. Personal preparations included attending the preparatory service on the previous Friday, fasting and private

⁴⁸ A detailed report of the interviews is given in Appendix B.

devotions at home, wearing of white clothes at worship. Many of them were regular communicants, especially the women. Although the South Kerala Diocesan tradition allowed a comparatively high degree of participation by the laity in worship, there are people who believe that there is scope for a higher degree of participation; for example, one layman wanted opportunities to preach in the church.

At least one of the respondents believed that Christ was the celebrant of the Eucharist and the presbyter and the congregation joined with Christ in the celebration. The respondents expected much from the preaching and wanted the preachers to relate their messages to the rest of the worship and to daily life.

The respondents are generally satisfied with the *Order for the Lord's Supper* (1979). But they suggested changes here and there, one with regard to the Intercession and another concerning the Prayer of Humble Access. They do not have any particular difficulty with the language of the liturgy.

Many of them treated the hour of the eucharistic worship as an occasion for personal renewal. One believed that when he received the Communion, he was receiving Christ himself. Others found the hour of the Communion as a time of closer fellowship with God.

The respondents had a general awareness of its influence on the corporate life of the church. But many of them did not think of it as having any implications for or effect on the larger society. They confessed that they were not aware of its strength in preparing the church and its members for their mission in that world, or of the implications of the Eucharist for the wider world. But a few viewed the Eucharist as a miracle that brings together people of different social and economic backgrounds around the Lord's Table.

2.3.5.2. *The Eucharist in the Madhya Kerala Diocese*

a. The history of the diocese:

The Madhya Kerala Diocese has an Anglican background. The Anglican mission in Travancore was initiated by the Church Missionary Society. The first missionary, Thomas Norton arrived in Alleppey in 1816, followed by Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn, and Henry Baker. The Travancore-Cochin Anglican Diocese was established in 1879. When it joined

the CSI in 1947, its Cochin portion merged with the Basel Mission area in Malabar to form the North Kerala Diocese.

The first intention the Church Missionary Society when they sent their missionaries to Travancore in 1816 was purely to assist the ancient Syrian Orthodox Church. Their “helping mission” was soon called off owing to serious misunderstandings with the Syrian Church in 1836.⁴⁹ The missionaries then focused their attention upon the poor and oppressed groups of “low caste” people, many of who showed a readiness to receive the Gospel. The missionaries not only built schools and churches for them but also endeavoured to redeem them from slavery and to secure their basic human rights. To achieve these ends the missionaries had to encounter the resistance of local rulers as well as of the “Syrian” Christian faction within the church. The latter were unable to view the converts from the “lower castes” as their own brothers and sisters. But the work of the missionaries had a great impact on the history of the region and it slowly opened the eyes of the local church to concede the rights of the poor at least to a limited extent. Today after 180 years of missionary- and church history, caste prejudice and discrimination still persist in the Kerala churches, not to mention in the wider society.⁵⁰ But today more than ever the oppressed, who call themselves “the Dalits,” are conscious of their rights and privileges and are seeking to redress the balance. Credit for their conscientisation goes partly to the efforts of the missionaries in the past and partly to those of the Marxists who have taken up the cause of the oppressed after the departure of the missionaries.

b. The liturgical tradition:

There was an initial resistance to the change over from the *Book of Common Prayer* to the CSI *Book of Common Worship*; some parishes stuck on to the Anglican order and even moved law courts to continue its use. Nevertheless the CSI *Order for the Lord's Supper* has become popular since the seventies. But the Anglican orders of baptism, marriage, burial, and minor offices still enjoy the favour of the clergy. The clergy of Madhya Kerala diocese with its Anglican legacy are known for their punctilious observance of the rubrics of the liturgy. They also have a fancy for ceremonies and hieratic chants in imitation of the Orthodox and Mar Thoma priests of Central Kerala with whom they would like themselves to be compared. The diocesan administration has cautioned the presbyters from making changes in the format or the approved ways of following the rubrics of any order of worship

⁴⁹ For a history of the work of the CMS in Travancore-Cochin, see W.S. Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin 1816-1916* (Kottayam: CMS Press, 1918, 1920; reprint, 1970).

without the prior permission of the bishop. It has also virtually banned the use of “special songs” (songs which are not in the approved hymnals) in any of the formal church services.⁵¹ The CSI lectionaries are strictly followed, and the liturgical colours are strictly observed, not only in the case of the stoles, but also often in the case of the altar linen also.

c. Church organisation:

The Madhya Kerala diocese has 103 pastorates, 382 congregations and 150,000 members. The diocese is divided into 11 districts having 8-10 pastorates. Each pastorate in the Madhya Kerala diocese is composed of a head station and a number of outstations. Presbyters are in charge of most of the pastorates. The special care of the presbyter is the head station or the central parish, which pays the lion’s share of his salary. The outstations are pastored by full-time or part-time lay church workers or by volunteer evangelists. Many of these unordained church workers have nominal or negligible theological training and their ministry is far from satisfactory. The presbyter may visit the outstations only for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist, which may be once in a month or sometimes as rarely as once in three months. The outstations are not independent; they are under the administrative control of the pastorate committee chaired by the presbyter. The outstation congregations are largely dependent upon the lay workers for their Christian nurture while the head station congregations receive the best of the ministrations of highly educated and able ministers. The end result is that the outstations are usually found undernourished and handicapped in all aspects of Christian education, faith and practice. This is the general structure of the pastorates in all Kerala CSI dioceses with the exception of the South Kerala diocese where each congregation has an independent status and is directly responsible to the district chairman.

This situation is outrageous because the outstations are by and large economically backward Dalit village congregations whereas the head stations are better off “upper caste” town congregations. In other words, these congregations are being systematically discriminated against. Such “ecclesiastical” discriminations have prevailed for generations; eventually weak congregations grow weaker and strong congregations grow stronger. It is against this background that one has to assess the sacramental life of these parishes.

⁵⁰ See Ninan Koshy, *Caste in the Kerala Churches*, (Bangalore: CISRS, 1968).

⁵¹ See the *CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese Diary 1998* (Kottayam: CMS Press, 1997) 56-58.

d. Worship in general and the place of the Eucharist:

The ex-Anglicans are ‘people of the *prayer book*.’ The morning and evening services, not to mention the Eucharist, are conducted strictly according to the letter of the prayer book (if against its spirit!).

In congregations where there is a resident presbyter, the Eucharist is celebrated on the first and third Sundays of the month. In other congregations it is celebrated less frequently (once in a month or once in two or even three months based on the availability of the presbyter). There is no practice of conducting preparatory services for the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is very much the central liturgy in the life of the church and of the members in the Madhya Kerala diocese. Chancels are specifically designed for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is generally presumed that the presbyter is primarily a minister of the sacraments. The Eucharist is celebrated usually twice or more than twice in the head-stations; many large parishes have short celebrations on Fridays following the Anglican tradition. But the Eucharist at such short intervals is unheard of in the outstations for reasons mentioned above.

Worship is rigid, formal and solemn to a fault on account of the meticulous observance of every rubric of the liturgy. The CSI liturgy is treated as an “Anglican” rite and the freedom it allows is often overlooked. The sombre atmosphere of the worship gets the better of the intrinsic liveliness of the CSI liturgy.

e. The celebration of the Eucharist:

The Eucharist is celebrated in a formal atmosphere. It is usual for the ministers to chant parts of the service in an effort to enhance its solemnity. There is no break in the service after the first benediction. Nobody leaves in the middle of the service. The non-communicants, including children, stay on till the end of the whole service. It is not unusual for a small child to accompany his or her parents to the communion rails where the presbyter may lay his hands on the child. The presence of the children is taken for granted; they have no participation at all and no special attention is paid to their needs or abilities. They are expected to behave themselves and sit through what is practically a worship service meant for the adults.

In congregations where presbyters are available, the Eucharist is celebrated on special days like Christmas, Easter, New Year, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day etc. and in some

churches on saints' days too. As mentioned earlier many large congregations have Friday communions. Communion for the sick is also celebrated in homes, hospital wards, prisons, etc.

The chancels are designed primarily for celebrating and for administering communion in them. Wine is administered out of a common cup with a spoon. Lay participation is practically non-existent on the altar side of the communion rails. During the worship that section of the chancel is 'out of bounds' for the laity. In true Anglican spirit, people believe that the celebration of the communion is the exclusive prerogative of the presbyter who performs his priestly functions on behalf of the congregation. The presbyter is primarily a *priest*, who administers the sacraments. In the eucharistic service, the presbyter single-handedly, or with the assistance of other clergy celebrates the Eucharist. He reads the Gospel, leads the Intercession, and administers the bread and the wine. On account of his priestly office and functions, the laity would like their presbyter to see the presbyter robed in his cassock not only during the worship but always!

f. The Eucharist at St Thomas' Church, Kallely:

This is a village congregation, which was founded in 1927. *The Book of Common Prayer* continued to be in use in this congregation right into the seventies. But now *The CSI Book of Common Worship* is being used and people are familiar with it. The Eucharist is celebrated on the first and third Sundays of the month. Presently there are a hundred families in this middle-class parish all living in the neighbourhood of the church. There are no Dalit Christian families in the parish. A resident presbyter is in charge of this congregation. This congregation has two outstations; the minister visits each of them once a month to conduct the eucharistic service. The outstations have voluntary workers.

The church building stands on a hillside and is well maintained. It has a wide chancel, as wide as the nave, so that the holy table is clearly visible from every part of the sanctuary. The communion rails run straight from one sidewall to the other so that all the communicants would kneel facing the east.

At the service, the order of the Eucharist in the *Book of Common Worship* was strictly followed. There was a procession and recession of the choir and the ministers. The Bible was carried in the procession. Later (senior) lay people brought forward, again in procession, the offertory, that is, the alms and the communion elements. The choir led the singing and people seemed to participate well. The lay participation in the worship consisted

of singing and saying the oral responses, the reading of the first two lessons, and the collection of the offertory. The lesson readers included young people and teenagers and not just the members of the church committee; this was in contrast to the general practice in the M. K. diocese where the members of the church committee dominate the worship services. The young people were very happy about their roles in the worship. The presbyter read the Gospel lesson, as it is the practice in the M.K. Diocese. The Peace greeting was passed around with the assistance of two senior members of the church. All the participants stayed on till the end of the service. On the Sunday under observation, nearly a hundred people attended the Eucharist to the end but only thirty received communion.

The active participation of the young people in the Eucharist seemed to have an effect on the atmosphere of the eucharistic worship. It was observed that many parishes are overcoming the “Anglican barrier” and discovering the freedom and the joy of the CSI liturgy as evidenced by the participation of the youth in Kallely St Thomas’.

g. Survey on People’s Experiences of the Eucharist: a summary of responses⁵²

It was found that there were a variety of attitudes towards the Eucharist within the Kallely parish. There were many who made use of the hour of public worship as a time to make their private devotions, and who refused to see anything or anyone during the worship except themselves and God. One pooh-poohed a question about the role of the physical arrangements at the place of worship. But then there was one young person who thought that semi-circular communion rails in place of straight ones would contribute to a better sense of fellowship at communion.

The interviewees agreed on the importance of personal preparation. They came to the worship mentally prepared; some emphasised the importance of physical and spiritual preparation; some mentioned preparation as a family; some prayed and fasted. Many confessed that they felt very close to God at the communion; others emphasised their experience of personal cleansing.

There was a general awareness of the priestly role of the congregation in the eucharistic worship. It prompted some to pay attention to the words of the liturgy while praying and to participate wholeheartedly with the presbyter and the rest of the congregation in worship. The respondents were generally pleased with the responsibility given to the young people to read the Lessons and to collect the offertory. But one woman said she had objected when the

⁵² A detailed report of the interviews is given in Appendix B.

minister wanted the young people to join the offertory procession as she thought the young people were not serious-minded.

The respondents on the whole did expect much from the Sermon. They did not have any difficulty with the language of the liturgy. Some wanted to see more emphasis on penitence and others wanted a more elaborate and meaningful intercessory prayer. Favourite liturgical prayers or great moments in the worship varied among the respondents.

Among the respondents, there were those who were concerned about the world outside the church and their innumerable needs. Some saw the Eucharist not just as a ritual but as a spiritual exercise for personal renewal and as a sacrament of unity, which was, according to them, the very foundation of the congregation's existence. Some observed that unity and positive changes in the life of the eucharistic community were means of ethical influence and challenge upon the wider community.

But the celebration of the Eucharist lacked meaning for and failed to minister to their need of people like that of a non-communicant who was also interviewed. It seems that it was dissatisfaction with his own personal preparation or the seeming lack of it in the lives of others considerably disturbed the non-communicant who was a compulsive churchgoer. It appeared that there were more people like him among the regular churchgoers but the minister was not aware of their existence.

2.3.5.3. The Eucharist in the East Kerala Diocese

a. The history of the diocese:

The East Kerala diocese was formed in 1984 following the bifurcation of the Madhya Kerala diocese. The majority of Christians in this diocese have a tribal background. Many of the churches are situated in remote areas in the hilly terrains of East Kerala. The tribal Christians are strong believers with a great zeal for mission and evangelism. They are an enterprising and hard-working people. A good percentage of them are highly educated and work in responsible positions in the government and elsewhere. The plantation areas in the high ranges are also part of this diocese. The immigrant Christian Tamil workers in the tea plantations are zealous Christians. There are also churches in this diocese belonging to the Dalits and other communities. The new diocese was created to offer better pastoral care to the Christian congregations scattered in the hills and to strengthen missionary activities.

After the inception of the new diocese several new congregations have sprung up. In the last few years the diocese has registered remarkable growth in all areas of its activity.

b. The liturgical tradition:

The East Kerala diocese shares the Anglican worship and sacramental traditions of the Madhya Kerala diocese. The church buildings in both the dioceses have a similar design. The priestly role of the presbyters is generally emphasized in both. The new diocese has bravely welcomed changes in the area of worship as well as in other areas of the church's ministry. Particularly, it has encouraged the active participation of the laity in worship. Compared to Madhya Kerala diocese, there is much more freedom in worship and no undue insistence on rubrics. There are conscious efforts to integrate the worship in the church with the meetings of the house churches known as "fellowship meetings." The CSI lectionary is followed. Liturgical colours are used.

c. Church organisation:

The pastorates are similar in structure to the ones in the Madhya Kerala diocese: the head station-outstation structure of the pastorates and the inequality of pastoral care are found here as well. The diocese has mainly three kinds of parishes, namely, the predominantly tribal Christian parishes, the predominantly Dalit parishes, and the plantation area (Tamil) parishes. The diocese has a total population of 55,000. There are 7 church districts and 54 pastorates.

d. Worship in general and the place of the Eucharist:

Although the diocese has an Anglican background, "Anglicanism" has not posed any barriers to making changes in the format of the worship. In many parishes the free and joyful spirit of the CSI liturgy is being discovered. One reason for this is the lively evangelical spirit of the Christians especially in the tribal and the plantation areas. The Eucharist is celebrated on the first and third Sundays of the month wherever there are resident presbyters and less often in other churches.

It is necessary here to take note of the so-called "fellowship groups" in this diocese for they play a major role in the devotional life of the Christians in this area. It is worthwhile to assess their place, role and scope in relation to the liturgical life of the parishes. This is a characteristic phenomenon of the parishes in the tribal and the plantation areas, although they are found in many parishes in other areas of the diocese as well. The fellowship

meeting is a kind of house church movement. Informality, high degree of lay leadership and participation, active involvement of women, egalitarianism and a characteristic sense of solidarity are the hallmarks of these groups. The fellowship meetings are generally held once a week in the homes of the members of the church. 20-30 people usually attend them, and sometimes more. The leaders of these meetings are laymen and women. But presbyters lend their support and leadership to these gatherings according to need. These meetings are mainly attended by adults, as they are held in late evenings when the children are at their studies. But children are not unwelcome to these meetings. These are “fellowship meetings” in the true spirit of the phrase where the participants feel quite free and relaxed in the homely atmosphere. Much time is devoted to singing, prayer and Bible study and personal testimonies. Some times these meetings assume a highly charged emotional climate. Lay people, both men and women, take leadership at these meetings. The preacher is usually a lay person who delivers a Biblical exhortation in a very simple style. There is a great emphasis on intercessions; in fact these meetings are primarily *prayer* meetings. Emotions like piety, grief, fear, anxiety, guilt, etc. are freely expressed. These meetings have a great role in solving the spiritual and emotional needs of the members. They are the arenas where problems and anxieties are identified and resolved or reconciled with. The fellowship groups also foster lay leadership by nurturing the spiritual gifts individuals.

These meetings serve to supplement the Sunday church services and remedy their deficiencies. There are some negative aspects: first of all, the fellowship meetings are often escapist in character trying to divert people’s attention instead of helping them to confront the realities of daily life: the pressures, monotony, suffering, oppression of the work in the plantation. Secondly, the fellowship members often look down upon non-members with a “holier-than-thou” attitude. Thirdly, at least a small percentage of its members tend to view these meeting as substitutes for church services including the Eucharist. Finally, there is a tendency to separate one’s high-wire spirituality from the day to day life, so that there is a contradiction between the faith and the spiritual values expressed at the meeting and lifestyle at home or in the work place. But all the above criticisms could be made against the formal worship and witness of any church.

The positive effect of the fellowship groups is reflected to a large degree in the eucharistic worship in the diocese. The Eucharist is a climax or a completion of the fellowship the members already enjoy in Christ. The lay people find the fellowship groups a means of bridging the gap between life during the weekdays and the worship on Sundays. In other words, the fellowship groups supplement the eucharistic worship. But it is sad that the

freedom and the joyfulness of the fellowship groups are less in evidence in the Eucharist on account of the supposed constraints of the liturgical format which persist despite the freedom allowed by the diocese.

e. The celebration of the Eucharist:

The Eucharist is celebrated very much in the same manner as in the Madhya Kerala diocese, with processions and recessions and ceremonies. But evidently there is more freedom. In fact, the East Kerala diocesan administration has formally encouraged innovations in worship within the limits of freedom allowed by the liturgy. Lay participation is encouraged and, apart from reading the lessons, usually one or more lay persons lead the intercessions. Intercessions are given considerable importance in public worship. The singing is not confined to the church hymnals but other songs (e.g. revival songs) are also used.

f. The Eucharist at CSI St George's Church, Pallikkunnu:

This church is situated in the plantation area. The beautiful church stands in lush green surroundings on a hillock but close to the main road. The church has the design of a typical Anglican place of worship. But the chancel is too narrow and the altar is not clearly visible from all parts of the church. The communion rails are straight making the communicants to face one direction when they kneel to receive communion.

An ex-Anglican parish, formerly started by British planters way back in 1870, St George's today is an active "Malayalam" congregation with a Malayalam-speaking presbyter. But, surprisingly enough, the majority of the worshippers are Tamil-speaking labourers working in the local tea plantations. There are about 300 families in this congregation. Although the services are in Malayalam and not in Tamil, the Tamils are also able to participate in the worship, as they are sufficiently literate in Malayalam, after having lived in Kerala for so long. But Tamil lessons and lyrics are always included in the order of service. The preaching was mainly geared to the standard of the majority of the worshippers who are Tamil-speaking, plantation workers having little education. So it is not surprising that the minority who are Malayalam-speaking business people, planters and professionals feel a little out of place at the worship in spite of the ardent efforts of the minister to cater to their personal needs. At least one Malayalam-speaking college student expressed his dissatisfaction. But on the whole there is some integration between the Tamil-Malayalee and middle class-working class groups as was noted at a 'cottage prayer' at the residence of

a Malayalee business man which the researcher had attended; more than half of the participants were Tamil-speaking workers.

The attendance in the church and the participation in the Eucharist was remarkable considering the fact that most of the parishioners lived at a distance from the church, between three to seven kilometers away, many of them having to walk that distance over an unfriendly hilly terrain. There was a rare zeal and keenness in that kind of church attendance. They also exhibited similar zeal by prayerfully preparing themselves and their families for the Eucharist.

On the Sunday under observation, there were two services of the Holy Eucharist on the first and third Sundays, one at 6.30 a.m. and the other at 9.30 a.m. as usual. Both the services were well attended. Moreover almost all the participants, numbering 120-150, received communion at each of these services. The oral responses were fairly good. There was a senior presbyter and a lay pastoral assistant ministering to this congregation. The pastoral assistant, who is a Tamil, had only a nominal role at the eucharistic services apart from leading the responsive reading of Psalms. Lay people, a man and a woman, read the first two lessons. In this church, men and women, the young and the old, members of the church committee as well as others take turns in reading the lessons and leading the intercessions during the Eucharist. A woman member of the parish committee led the Intercession, by mentioning the matters for prayer and asking people to pray; three people prayed. The comprehensiveness and the personal touch of the intercessory prayers were remarkable. Personal needs of the worshippers, needs of the congregation, the diocese and matters of concern in the church and the world were mentioned and prayed for. Being the first Sunday of the month, the offertory of the day included tithe offerings. After the service many stayed back for quite some time to chat with fellow-worshippers.

The fellowship meetings described earlier are quite active in this congregation.⁵³ But they are mainly organised by the Tamil workers among themselves. These evening meetings are fully patronised by the church; they take place once a week in six areas in the homes of the church members. As a rule, the presbyter, the evangelist, and the Tamil members of the parish committee attend all the six meetings in the week and take an active part in them. These gatherings allow excellent lay participation providing opportunities for everyone to sing, pray, preach and share news and experiences and testimonies.

⁵³ The researcher took part in three meetings of the fellowship groups in the course of his short stay in the parish.

The lively, free, warm, congenial atmosphere of these gatherings is in sharp contrast to the usual coldness and formality of liturgical services. These meetings are also open to non-church members. Many have accepted the Christian faith by attending these gatherings including a member of the St. George's parish committee. The influence of these weekday meetings on the congregation as well as on the ministers of the church is remarkable. They supplement the worship services at the church and, by making the laity active and strong, invigorate the liturgical life of the congregation.

g. Survey on People's Experience of the Eucharist: a summary of responses:⁵⁴

The respondents revealed a high degree of awareness regarding the significance of the eucharistic fellowship. Many of them stated that God/Christ is the true celebrant of the Eucharist but the minister and the congregation had their share in its celebration. They valued whatever roles they had in the conduct of the worship. One said that the congregation has a priestly role, as the church was the "royal priesthood." There were others who are satisfied with their passive role in the worship and did not expect much out of it.

Most of the respondents emphasized the importance of personal preparation; preparation included self-examination, confession of sin, prayer, fasting, and renunciation of personal sins and wrong attitudes. One insisted on the need for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be able to participate in the communion.

Many treated the Eucharist as an aid to personal devotion. They found it as a means of being reconciled with God and of receiving healing and peace of mind. Some treated the Eucharist as a time of meditation on the cross of Christ. They liked to pray and communicate with God in private while the service was going on, and not be distracted by the presence of fellow-worshippers; they would not be distracted even by looking at the prayer book. But there were others who were fascinated by the moving prayers that are in the liturgy and have made them their own prayers; some of them wanted a better prayer of Adoration and a stronger form of Intercession.

There were a few who had never given any thought about the impact of the Eucharist on the society. But there are those who had discovered the social and ethical implications of the liturgy in the life of the Christian community and of outsiders. For example, one person pointed out that the church's prayers for the world has great effectiveness. Another interviewee noticed that the Eucharist brought together the Tamils and the Malayalees, the

⁵⁴ A detailed report of the interviews is given in Appendix B.

labourers and the administrative staff to receive communion together as members of the same fellowship. But he lamented that such bonhomie and fellowship were limited to the four walls of the church; often they were not much more than a ritual expression, and not really followed up on other days and carried on into other spheres of common life.

2.3.5.4. The Eucharist in the North Kerala Diocese

a. The history of the diocese:

The diocese has a chequered history related to its missionary past. It has both Basel Mission and Anglican legacies. The first missionary of the Basel Mission (which is a mission in the Swiss Reformed tradition founded in 1816 at Basel, Switzerland), Hermann Gundert, arrived in Malabar in 1839. The mission founded churches all over Malabar. Apart from the evangelistic and pastoral ministry, the mission has made lasting contributions in the areas of education, literature, health, and in the social emancipation through its vocational training institutes and industries. The ex-Anglican churches, which were added to the North Kerala diocese in 1947, had formerly belonged to the Travancore-Cochin Diocese. The territory of North Kerala Diocese encompasses about one half of Kerala's geographical area over which its congregations lie scattered. In certain districts Christians are a negligible minority among the Muslim and Hindu populations.

b. Liturgical tradition:

The diocese has four districts; of these all excepting the Malabar district have an Anglican background. This study was focused on the Malabar district with its Basel Mission background to discover the attitude towards the Eucharist and the manner of celebrating it in this area. The pattern of worship in the Anglican area is similar to the worship in the Madhya Kerala and the East Kerala dioceses.

c. Church Organisation

There are 98 pastorates in the North Kerala diocese and a total population of 110,000. The pastorates are organised in the same pattern as the Madhya Kerala and East Kerala pastorates with their head stations and outstations.

d. Worship in general and the place of the Eucharist:

The CSI liturgy was accepted in the ex-Basel Mission area in the North Kerala diocese only by 1975, after a long period of resistance. There are still four or five parishes in Malabar district, which do not use the CSI liturgy at all. In some parishes, although the CSI liturgy is accepted, the Basel Mission liturgy is also used occasionally.

As for the Eucharist, the Basel Mission practice in the olden days was to have the Lord's Supper only twice a year, that is on Maundy Thursday and at the year-ending service. There was no practice of having the Eucharist at Christmas or Easter Day services. It was a Basel Mission practice to give a very early notice about the Lord's Supper and exhortations about the gravity of the occasion so that the participants might come physically and mentally prepared for the service. As a rule no one except a handful of elderly folk in the congregation received communion at those services. The "Devotion before the Lord's Supper"⁵⁵ in *The Book of Common Worship* owes its origin to the Basel Mission prayer book (as well as to the *Book of Common Order* of the Church of Scotland).

The practice of the Eucharist, which emphasizes unity and reconciliation among the worshippers, derives special significance in the ex-Basel Mission area since there is little or no caste discrimination in this area. This attitude is in keeping with the best of the cultural traditions of the Thiyya community to which the majority of the ex-Basel Mission members belonged.

e. The celebration of the Eucharist:

As stated above, in most of the churches in the ex-Basel Mission area, the Eucharist is celebrated according to the CSI order of worship. But in the celebrations of the CSI liturgy, the traditional Basel Mission rubrics and practices are followed and even jealously guarded. In conservative ex-Basel Mission churches there is no choir but the congregation sings excellently well by themselves. In these churches, the organ or any other musical instrument is not used for the regular church services. The Eucharist is of course celebrated facing the people, as this was the original Basel Mission practice. The liturgical colours are not used; the black stole is used irrespective of liturgical seasons. Only the Basel Mission hymnal is used and it does not contain any Indian hymns or tunes.

⁵⁵ *The Book of Common Worship*, 2-4.

The Basel Mission lectionary is used instead of the CSI lectionary. The usual practice is to read only two lessons and the psalm instead of the CSI practice of reading three lessons and a psalm. The priority given to the Gospel lesson in the CSI is not found; in fact, often the Gospel does not form part of the lections at all. One person reads both the lessons. The reader is usually, one of the parish committee members who are called Elders. Following the Basel Mission practice, the reading of the lessons is interspersed with stanzas from a hymn. Before the Sermon, the preacher asks the congregation to pray silently for a few moments for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The preacher again prays in his own words before and after the sermon.

The Kiss of Peace is not practised. During the distribution of the elements, the senior members of the church receive the sacrament before the young people; men receive before women. The words of administration are: "Take and eat; this is the Body of Jesus Christ. Do this in remembrance of him." and "Take and drink; this is the Blood of Jesus Christ. Do this in remembrance of him." The role of the common cup is emphasised as a primary sign of eucharistic fellowship. As a rule the spoon is not used. These practices are all part of the Basel Mission liturgical tradition.

f. The Eucharist at Church of South India parish, Thalap, Kannur:

This is a congregation that meets in a small chapel in Kannur. The chapel was built some 60 years ago. The small size of the building provides for a sense of fellowship and warmth. The chancel looks like a thrust stage providing a clear view of the centrally located Lord's table. The communion rails are semicircular. The pulpit-cum-lectern is on the right side of the Lord's table.

CSI, Thalap is not a separate parish but only a congregation that belongs to the Hebich's pastorate. But since those who worship in this chapel are regular attenders, the body of worshippers has taken the character of an independent congregation. Not less than 40-50 people attend the church every Sunday. But among them there are very few young people and children. An evangelist, who is a paid staff member of the pastorate, is responsible for leading the worship and meeting the pastoral needs of this congregation. A senior member of the Hebich's pastorate committee, who resides in the area, assists the evangelist in the arrangements. He gets up the place for the worship services, reads the lessons, and collects the alms of the people. On the first Sunday of every month, the presbyter of the Hebich's church makes a visit and celebrates the Eucharist. On the other Sundays the evangelist

conducts the morning and the evening services according to the Basel Mission order of worship.

On the Sunday under observation, the Eucharist was celebrated in the Basel Mission way. The lessons were taken from the Basel Mission lectionary. The Basel Mission hymnal was used. There was no choir or organ, procession or recession. The lay participation consisted of the elder reading the two lessons, the lay evangelist leading the intercession, and the elder collecting the offertory. As for the Intercession the evangelist used the second litany without specially mentioning needs of the congregation and of the world. There was no Kiss of Peace, as it is not practised in the ex-Basel Mission area. Contrary to the Basel Mission practice, a spoon was used to administer the wine. Out of the 50 people who attended, 24 received communion. A few stayed back after the service to chat with fellow-worshippers.

g. Survey on People's Experience of the Eucharist: a summary of the responses:⁵⁶

Almost all of the respondents at Thalap have been brought up in the rigorous penitential discipline of Basel Mission. It has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that people try to prepare well to take part in the Eucharist and to find healing, peace, happiness, and reconciliation with God. The disadvantage is that it can keep people away from the Lord's table, as in the case of a non-communicant who was interviewed (His family also kept away from the Lord's table although all of them were regular church-goers). Worse still is the case of the young who on account of the inherited trepidation would also keep away from the holy sacrament notwithstanding the "freedom," and the "beauty" of the CSI liturgy which had attracted some respondents. There were a few young people who were regular communicants. But they have little voice among the older people. These young people have different ideas about worship, like the affinity to modern Christian songs, and the desire to make the Eucharist more meaningful to other young people.

Many of the respondents at Thalap evinced deep awareness of the eucharistic experience. Both regular and irregular communicants seemed to value it highly. They were fairly aware of their responsibilities as participants in the Eucharist. While one person named the presbyter as the celebrant of the Eucharist, others saw Christ as the celebrant with the congregation playing its part in the celebration. There was general satisfaction with the degree of lay participation although it was limited to one or two lay people, one of them being the lay evangelist in charge of the congregation.

⁵⁶ A detailed report of the interviews is given in Appendix B.

Generally everyone saw the Eucharist as a means for personal renewal. Some described the eucharistic experience as “closeness to God.” A couple mentioned an experience of “peace and harmony in the family and a sense of fellowship within the congregation.” Another experienced physical healing, yet another answers to prayer. One confessed that he did not have any special expectations about the Eucharist.

None of the respondents found the language of the liturgy difficult. Different prayers were named as the favourites, including the Prayer for the Presence and the Prayer of Humble Access. A prayer book did not seem essential to some who would rather listen to the prayers or have their personal devotions during the Eucharist. Many emphasised the role of music in worship.

Some saw the Eucharist as having a great role in bringing amity and reconciliation among the members of the congregation belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds. Some were aware of the church’s social responsibility. They were conscious of the impression created by the church’s worship on outsiders and of the social impact of the Eucharist.

2.3.5.4. General Findings

- a. Nearly fifty years since its inception, today the CSI eucharistic liturgy has been widely accepted in the Kerala dioceses. Some prayers in the liturgy have become the favourites of the people. But a few churches in the Malabar district still refuse to use the CSI liturgy in place of their traditional liturgy.
- b. The CSI liturgy is a visible sign of church unity within the uniting denominations in the Kerala CSI. The liturgy holds together different church traditions, and brings around the holy table people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds.
- c. Nevertheless the traditional Anglican, Congregational, and Basel Mission prejudices persist in many large parishes in the respective areas and continue to vitiate the free and unifying atmosphere of CSI worship and mould unwholesome attitudes towards the Eucharist. There is nothing wrong with celebrating the Eucharist in a variety of ways; but bigoted attachment to traditions destroys the freedom, joy, and the participatory qualities of the CSI worship.

- d. Sadly often the camaraderie at the Lord's table does not extend much beyond the confines of the church building. Sometimes the Eucharist, instead of being a dynamic symbol of unity in Christ, becomes either a searing indictment of caste prejudices and economic injustices or a camouflage for seething hostilities that continue to fragment the Christian community. The disparity shown in the Kerala dioceses (excepting South Kerala Diocese) in the double standard of conducting the Eucharist in the head-stations and outstations is to be strongly condemned. In line with the second class treatment meted out to the Dalit or other economically weak parishes in all aspects, regular Eucharist is also denied to them. This wrong practice is grounded upon nothing other than economic considerations and caste prejudices.
- e. There is a certain amount of homogeneity in terms of the approach to the Eucharist in all the four dioceses. There is good church attendance everywhere. In all the congregations it was possible to discover a large group of sincere worshippers who come to the church with great expectations having prepared themselves physically, mentally and spiritually to participate in the Eucharist. They have a great zeal to worship God in fellowship with others. They find that God answers their prayers, assures them of his companionship and gives them peace in their heart, in their families, and in the church. They believe that God calls them to be instruments of his peace in the wider community.
- f. It is imperative that the church ensures the active participation of the laity in all areas related to the planning and celebration of the Eucharist. Having been accustomed to clerical predominance in worship for centuries, both the clergy and the laity seem to be unaware of the crucial importance of lay involvement in the worship. Many do not realise that the liturgical action is the prerogative of the whole church and not a special privilege of the clergy. The church's liturgy must gather up the fruits of the spiritual gifts that God has given to every member of the church and offer them to God in the eucharistic thanksgiving.

But there are clear indications of the desire of the laity for greater involvement. The present study reveals that the laity generally endorse and enjoy steps that promote increased participation in worship. Participation could take different forms having the purpose of enabling every member of the church to be faithful to God's calling and to exercise his or her spiritual gifts for the glory of God and the extension of God's Kingdom. It may mean corporate sharing of the Word of God, or sharing the problems,

experiences and testimonies of the people, or sharing leadership in imaginative ways at celebrations of the Eucharist.

It is possible that the growing phenomenon of the “fellowship groups” in the East Kerala diocese is a concealed protest against the lack of lay participation in the strict ritualistic atmosphere of the church’s worship or a healthy supplement to the same. Anyway the diocese has adopted measures to contain the movement within the church.

- g. There is the need to have a special focus on the young generation. All over Kerala, children and young people attend worship including the Eucharist in large numbers. In South Kerala Diocese it is usual to send the children out before the Breaking of the Bread as if they have no role in the celebration of the Eucharist. All the dioceses ought to find ways to meet the needs of the children and the youth and to make use of their special gifts in the worship of the church, which could make the eucharistic worship much more dynamic. The CSI liturgy is not exclusively for the elderly! In the Basel Mission area of the North Kerala Diocese, many still believe that the Eucharist is only for the senior members of the congregation. These wrong notions ought to be corrected.
- h. In the same way pastoral care of the thinking and the serious members of the church who stay away from the Eucharist must be attended to. It is suspected that there are quite a number of keen worshippers who would not align themselves with the eucharistic community for various reasons. The local ministers were not aware of the two cases of non-communicants until they were interviewed for this study.
- i. The present study shows that there is a general tendency to limit the eucharistic experience to the sphere of private religion at the total disregard of its ethical, economic and social implications. The concerns of many a sincere Christian do not extend beyond the confines of personal experience of God’s salvation to reach the suffering and the oppressed ones in the community, or even the local congregation. How many are bothered about the economic disparities or the caste differences that exist within the congregation or in the wider community? These are difficult days for the church in India where the church is encountering resistance and hostility in all parts of India. These realities may not feature in the prayers of confession or intercession of many congregations. It is contrary to the purpose of the Eucharist if the church’s worship fosters only private religion and pampers the egos of self-seeking, complacent Christians. The church’s liturgy should expose the problem areas of the world, the pain and the suffering of the people, and provoke and challenge the worshippers to engage in

the mission of Christ in the world. The Eucharist is pre-eminently a practice of divine justice; its agenda is nothing less than the agenda of the Kingdom of God.

- j. The study also takes note of suggestions made by some respondents for improvements in the format of the liturgy. They include more elaborate forms of adoration, confession, intercession, more responsive prayers, and more periods of silence.

2.3.6. Conclusion

The present study has examined the place and the importance of the CSI eucharistic liturgy in the worship and life of the four CSI dioceses in Kerala. It has focused on the church's practice of the Eucharist and on the faith and the experiences of lay people in these dioceses. The study was based on observations and interviews conducted in a representative congregation in each of the above dioceses. It was found that the laity on the whole are satisfied with the CSI liturgy or the *Order for the Lord's Supper*. But are they satisfied because the liturgy is innocuous and undemanding so that they could relegate their Christian responsibilities to the "professionals" of the church and consign their religiosity to an hour and half on Sundays? Are they pleased because the liturgy serves but to foster their private religion at the expense of their social and spiritual obligations?

It is in the area of worship that the Christian believers in these dioceses have a commonality as members of a united and uniting church. On the whole, the people of these dioceses have accepted the CSI liturgy as a common statement of faith. The church stands united around a common table. One may dare to claim that the CSI has consolidated its first victory by bringing warring and disparate denominations around the Lord's Table. Now it is the time for the church to push forward by scoring more victories in terms of mobilising its members to be servants and witnesses to the wider community. The worshipping church must be empowered to bear witness to the Kingdom of God, to fight injustices, to assist the poor and the oppressed, and to be servants of all. This is the area where the CSI pattern of worship needs change and adaptation.

It will be absurd to attribute all the defects in the worship of the CSI summarised in the "General Findings" to the CSI liturgy alone. Many of those deficiencies are rooted in the accumulated traditions and cultural peculiarities of the Kerala Christian communities and in the basically selfish human nature. But on the other hand, these findings demonstrate that the CSI liturgy generally fails to open the eyes of the worshippers, to enable them focus their attention on the demands of the Kingdom of God and its values, and to help them to forge

ahead with the mission entrusted to the church by the Lord. The liturgy needs revamping and rejuvenation. The situation calls for a process of urgent liturgical renewal.

2.4. Liturgical Renewal in the Church of South India

2.4.1. The Need for Liturgical Renewal

Although the CSI has a great liturgical tradition, which has proved to be a means of unity and new life in the united church, today it needs to think of liturgical renewal for many reasons other than those mentioned above. Times have changed and the Church of South India stands on the threshold of a new millennium. The church represents a new generation with new needs, problems, and aspirations. The church needs a new liturgical pattern attuned with the culture of the land.

An urgent call for liturgical reforms was sounded by the Evaluation Commission of the CSI, which presented its interim report in the Synod of 1998.⁵⁷ It has done a study “on the life and work of the church.” Among the many areas of the church’s life, the report refers to the liturgical life of the CSI. It has made two important recommendations. The first recommendation is to include “more indigenous elements” in the liturgy. The Commission said,

Considering worship as a moment and expression of unity and affirming the richness and beauty of CSI liturgy we recommend that due attention be paid to incorporate more indigenous and regional elements to it. A process of study may be evolved by which congregations are consulted in this revision of liturgy.⁵⁸

The Commission has asked the Synod Liturgy Committee to attend to this urgent need. Secondly, the Commission has recommended that the children may be allowed to receive the communion. The report says, “There is no theological justification to exclude them from receiving the means of grace as they are already baptised. Confirmation as a requirement for receiving communion is based on an unsound theology.”⁵⁹ The report has thus identified two areas where reform is urgently needed. The first is a matter of inculturation, and the

⁵⁷ “A Brief and Interim Report of the Evaluation Commission of the Church of South India,” *The South India Churchman* (March 1998) 11-16 (No volume or issue number).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

second concerns the demand wider and more meaningful participation in the liturgy.

Liturgical renewal in the CSI must begin with these issues.

The following section shows a guideline for developing a liturgy for the CSI that will enable the whole people of God to participate meaningfully in the eucharistic worship. It is derived from the findings so far made in this study.

2.4.2. Guiding Principles for Liturgical Renewal in CSI, Kerala State

The liturgy is basically dialogical in nature: it is a dialogue between the triune God and the people of God;⁶⁰ it is also a dialogue between the church and the world. At worship, the church should open up and be receptive to the voice of God. The church must also give ear to the cry of the oppressed; that is how the Psalmists worshipped Yahweh (cf. Ps. 9, 10, 12, etc.). Just as the church is obligated to respond to God, it is also obligated by God to respond to its social, cultural and religious milieu. It has to bring change its environment and at the same time undergo change in its own life where needed.

What are the principles that must guide the shaping or redesigning the liturgy of an open church? What priorities shall the CSI set before it to develop a CSI liturgy suited to the needs of the country and the needs of the people of God in Kerala State? The following guiding principles are based particularly on the study of the history of the CSI liturgy and of its influence on the members of the Kerala dioceses as discovered in the survey described in the preceding section.

- a. Liturgical renewal is a task to be undertaken with utmost caution and care:

This caveat is sounded not because reforms could offend people,⁶¹ but because the liturgy is close to the heart of a living church. People live with their liturgies and learn to love and cherish them as the means of its prayers and devotion to God. Liturgy is a cultural and a

⁶⁰ See, for example, *The Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy*, sec. 33, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 147: "Although the sacred liturgy is above all things the worship of the divine Majesty, it likewise contains abundant instructions for the faithful. For in the liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and prayer."

⁶¹ Efforts to reform the CSI liturgy have always countered resistance. For example, among the very few articles on the church's worship that have appeared in the *South India Churchman*, there is one written by Bishop S. Kulandran (at the time of writing, bishop of Jaffna), who disparages the efforts to "modernise" the CSI liturgy. He says, "What is modern today will cease to be that tomorrow, even as what was modern yesterday has become outmoded today." He defends the long-winded style of the liturgy: "The language of public devotion must also be lofty and dignified" and that "brevity can sometimes be extremely out of place." See "Comments on a Proposal to Modernise the CSI liturgy," *South India Churchman* (Jan. 1970) 10-11.

religious expression of a people. It is the repository of the church's faith and the justification for its socio-economic and political stance. Bryan Spinks voices two warnings. He says, "Human beings as worshippers need a regulated life. To change a liturgy which binds the community with its forebears, and which provides security and identity in an otherwise hostile or volatile community cannot be undertaken lightly or willingly."⁶² This calls for caution and care. On such grounds *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* prohibits haphazard and unpremeditated liturgical innovations.⁶³ It instructs reformers that liturgical revisions must answer the genuine need of the Church. Moreover innovations should fit into the existing system of worship in order to guard the unity and integrity of the church's fellowship. The CSI also needs to be vigilant about these aspects.

b. The liturgy should emphasise unity and wider ecumenism

The liturgy must symbolise the church's prayer for unity among all the branches of the universal church. It is with the purpose of bringing mutual understanding and integration among the constituent traditions that the Constitution of the Church of South India insists that every communion service may include certain elements, which were common to the liturgies of all the uniting churches.⁶⁴ This was a measure to plant the spirit of concord in the very heart of the church's worship, making its liturgy a 'sacrament of unity.'⁶⁵ This basic framework of the Eucharist links the liturgy of the church to the liturgical traditions and legacies of the universal Church.

⁶² Bryan D. Spinks, *Western Use and Abuse of Eastern Liturgical Traditions: Some Cross Sections in its History* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1992) 144. He also complains that the quest for simplification and clarity in worship has resulted in the loss of artistic beauty. He scoffs such thoughtless changes and remarks that the Eucharist, as a result, "often resembles a Macdonald's cafeteria system." (*Ibid.*, 145.)

⁶³ *Constitution*, sec. 22-23, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 146-147.

⁶⁴ The obligatory nine elements of Communion Service stipulated by the CSI Constitution are the following:

- i. Introductory prayers,
- ii. The Ministry of the Word,
- iii. The Preparation of the Communicants (Confession, Absolution, etc.),
- iv. The Offertory,
- v. The Thanksgiving, including the Words of Institution, setting apart of the communion (It is suggested that this section should begin with the *Sursum Corda* and the *Sanctus*),
- vi. An Intercession for the whole Church,
- vii. The Lord's Prayer,
- viii. The Administration of the Communion,
- ix. A Thanksgiving and self-dedication.

(The Creeds are optional). See Chapter 10, Rule 2 of *The Constitution of the Church of South India*, 60-62.

⁶⁵ St. Cyprian. See *Documents of Vatican II*, 26, footnote 26.

At the level of the congregation, the liturgy must generate a spirit of mutual acceptance, mutual forgiveness and reconciliation among the communicants. The present alienation of Dalit and tribal members and of their congregations must be remedied. The church must exemplify in its own life unity and integration so that its influence will be felt in the wider society. It must be carried over to the realm of social relationships in the wider community. Unity is of great importance to the nation too, especially in the context of the continuing marginalisation and oppression of Dalits, tribals and other weak sections of the society.

c. It should symbolise the Indian Christian experience:

A liturgy has to exhibit the characteristics and concerns of an Indian church. Most of those who were given responsibility to design the liturgy for the new united church were Western missionaries. They had to be true to their training in the history and traditions of the Western church. Today the task is to be exercised by the members of the Church of South India who have an entirely different background and concerns. They must visualise a liturgy that will represent India's response to God's work of salvation.

The CSI liturgy needs to find its place in its Indian milieu. It should reflect India's rich cultural, religious and artistic heritage in order to appeal to Indian hearts. CSI needs an 'authentic Indian liturgy.' Such a liturgy should take into account the plurality of religions and their rich devotional practices and traditions (e.g., ideas of awe in the presence of God and reverence for life; sense of austerity, rigour and sacrifice). It should gather up the prayers of the multitudes that populate the subcontinent, men, women and children, the young and the old. It should reflect and replenish the Indian qualities of amiability, hospitality, and neighbourliness. It should employ native abilities to communicate through the arts, through dance and drama, through rhythm and music. The Indian Christian tradition has much to offer in terms of its rich musical tradition, patterns of prayer and contemplation. There are several models of austerity, purity and self-less service which are so amply illustrated in the lives of Indian Christian saints like Narayan Vaman Tilak, Sadhu Sunder Singh, Pandita Rama Bai, Sister Alphonsa, Chavara Kuriakose Elias, Sadhu Mathaichen, Moothampakkal Kochukunju Upadeshi, Mosa Walsalam Sastriyar, and thousands of others. The liturgy must reflect these features of Indian spirituality.

David C. Scott⁶⁶ reminds the reformers that inculturation is some ingenious manoeuvre; it is not an improvised modification of the liturgical format. Rather it is an *incarnational*

⁶⁶ David C. Scott, "Worship in an Indian Christian Ethos," *Bangalore Theological Forum* 18 (April-Sept. 1986): 75-84.

process. Only Christians who are exposed to India's multi-religious and socio-cultural environment and who allow themselves to be saturated with that experience can practise inculturation. Such exposure will enable them to interact creatively with India's religious and cultural genius. Scott says that it may even enable them to help people of other faiths to find the realisations of the Gospel in their own ways. It will definitely enable the Christian to correct and sharpen his own faith. Scott points out that Jesus had saturated himself with Jewish culture and religion so intensively that he was able to engage himself with the spirit of that religion and convey his message of the kingdom in the categories of that religion. Just as he made himself at home in the Jewish religion, he makes himself at home in any other culture and identifies himself with any person. That is what incarnation implies. Scott points out the inevitability of risk in this process. But that risk-taking is comparable to the dying and rising of Christ and it is part and parcel of renewed faith and practice.⁶⁷ Scott says,

If we are committed to the incarnation, the self-disclosure of God, in the Indian human situation, there are implications for all aspects of the lives of Indian-Christians, including the life of worship. Then the Indian-Christian experience that forms the heart of the Gospel and expresses itself in and through worship will result in an incarnate faith with its own vibration, colour, tonality and total sensitivity, its own voice, symbolism and imagery in India.⁶⁸

It is true that inculturation has to be a spontaneous process, emanating from a church that practises inculturation.

But what Scott envisages as an ideal is already a reality in India. Indian Christian denominations are not foreign institutions and Indian Christians are not foreigners in their own land. But the theologian and the liturgist have to be open to Indian expressions of Christian experience in order to incorporate them in their theologies and formulations of the liturgy. Garrett refers to the richness of Indian Christian devotion. He says, "The foreigner who knows an Indian language can never fail to be inspired by the naturalness and grace

⁶⁷ Thinking along in the same lines about inculturation and risk-taking, C.S. Song says,

Jesus had his body broken so that he was able to break into the world beyond his own world and to affect the course of history beyond the history of his own nation. All this has its climactic symbolism enacted by Jesus in the sacramental event of the last supper. What we are engaged to do in relation to people of other cultures and religions is not merely a theological exercise or just a part of the agenda of Christian mission, but a sacramental activity, sharing in that sacramental event Jesus brought about with his own life and death. What is demanded of us is to listen with our ears open, empathy in our hearts, wonder in our souls, and discernment in our minds. See C.S. Song, "Do This in Memory of Jesus: The Root of the Reformed Heritage," in *Gospel and Cultures: Reformed Perspectives*, ed. H.S. Wilson, (Geneva: WARC, 1996) 32.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

with which many of the simplest brethren offer prayer in their own words; but an impression of this is not easy to convey in other languages.”⁶⁹

- d. It should be a sign of justice and a tool of moral formation:

Liturgy is the practice of justice as well as the preparation for the practice of justice. The ethical dimension of the liturgy cannot be overemphasized. Its ethical standards derive from Kingdom values. The liturgical action should have its reflection in the life and witness of the worshipping community.

According to Barbara Liotskos the Eucharist symbolises an egalitarian society. She claims that this is the Anglican ideal and says,

The Eucharist, in the simple actions of sharing food with all who are present and in offering money to be shared with those beyond our walls, characterises Anglican vocation as citizenship and service. The actions of the assembly offering Eucharist are signs of how life is to be lived: caring equally for all those whom we see and helping to provide for those we cannot see, ensuring that the resources of the earth are distributed to all.⁷⁰

But ideals have to be tested in practice. It is not the liturgical ritual as such but the people who testify to God’s justice, love and mercy by exemplifying these values in their life. God is glorified and his work of salvation in the dying and the rising of Christ is proclaimed by the ethical witness of the Christian community and of individual Christians. J. D. Crichton says,

It is through the witness of the lives of Christians that glory is given to God, and it is they who, expressing in their lives the mystery of Christ, manifest it to others. In short, it is redeemed man and woman who is responding to God in worship and life, who is sanctified by the redeeming love of Christ, who gives glory to God. In the phrase of Irenaeus, ‘It is the living human being who is the glory of God’ (*Gloria Dei vivens homo*).⁷¹

⁶⁹ T.S. Garrett, *Worship in the CSI*, 10. Bishop Leslie Brown speaks similarly from his own personal experience. It happened in Trivandrum, South India. Just before Christmas in 1944, a church of Dalit Christians was burned down by caste Hindus. On Christmas Day Brown celebrated the Eucharist with the traumatised congregation. During the worship he asked one of the congregation to pray. He prayed and it was a heart-rending prayer, an illustration of inimitable faith and spiritual vision. Brown says,

That prayer was wholly spontaneous and wholly liturgical too, though it came from a man who had never heard of liturgy and probably could not write his own language. The symbols were full of meaning, they conveyed truth. God spoke to him through them and he was able to respond, along with all his fellows – you should have heard the Amen to that prayer.

See L. W. Brown, *Relevant Liturgy*, 13-14.

⁷⁰ Barbara Liotskos “The Future of Liturgy: Some Thoughts and Dreams,” *Worship* 71 (1997) 50.

⁷¹ J.D. Crichton, “A Theology of Worship,” in C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold and P. Bradshaw

The liturgy should provoke, challenge and motivate the worshippers to bring glory to God by fighting evil in their personal lives, by resisting structures of oppression in their corporate life, and by working towards a just and peaceful social order in the world.

- e. The liturgy of the CSI should reflect the contemporary concerns of the nation and the priorities of the Church of South India:

As noted earlier, liturgy is not for the benefit of the church alone; rather it is for the benefit of all, as the Greek term *λειτουργία* signifies: it is a service undertaken for the benefit of the general public.⁷² Therefore it must, of necessity, be part and parcel of the church's concern and commitment to the welfare of the larger community. Liturgy acts as a bridge between the church and its neighbours, between the church and the world. So the church reaches its hands to heaven interceding for the whole world and joins the struggles of the poor and the oppressed everywhere. The problems that beset the nation are the concerns of the church as well. The liturgy must reflect the concerns of the poor and the oppressed of the nation and the concerns of those who fight for their liberation.

The liturgy is an activity of the local congregation; but those who are outside the Church also benefit from it directly or indirectly. For, there are non-Christians who look upon the church's worship as a channel to the saving God.⁷³ Regrettably, CSI liturgy leaves much to be desired either in terms of a lively proclamation of faith or as a form of missionary enterprise.

The concerns of the church today are different from its concerns at the time of the union. Then the liturgists had to satisfy each denomination that joined the union by making some mark of its identity on the common worship form. Today the church has more pressing human issues: unemployment, poverty, and disease, of systematic oppression of weaker sections of the society, like the Dalits, tribals, women, and children. A meaningful liturgy must respond to these issues. In a country where there is poverty and oppression, the celebration of the Eucharist must affirm that God is with the poor and the oppressed and manifest the church's solidarity with the poor.

(eds.) *The Study of Liturgy*, revised edn., (London: SPCK, and N.Y.: OUP, 1992; reprint, 1993) 28.

⁷² See above, Chap. 1, sec. 1.5.2.

⁷³ In a village on the suburbs of Trivandrum, Kerala, a church building had to be suddenly closed down following clashes between rival factions in the parish. But this alarmed the local Hindus who considered the closing down of a place of prayer as an act of the sacrilege which will bring the wrath of God upon the whole village. They pleaded with the church authorities to reopen the building for worship and it was done.

Samuel Rayan challenges the Indian church not to be shackled down by heartless ritualism but to declare solidarity with the struggle of the Dalits for liberation from their systematic oppression by a social and political system dominated by the upper classes. He says,

Solidarity with the downtrodden is an essential constituent of the Christian church. It is in choosing to be identified with them that the coming kingdom is discerned, met, and served. It is in their life, suffering, and struggles that we meet Jesus. Without participation in their pain, we scarcely keep the memory of the Lord's death in the scriptures and in the Eucharist. For the untouchables are the passion of Jesus. They are the Good Friday we grieve over with reverence and hope. They are the crucifixion of the Son of Man, the Son of God, today.⁷⁴

But unfortunately callousness to such oppression and injustice is an ingrained feature of the liturgies transplanted from the Western churches. Just because the above mentioned problems are not there in the Western social environment, they might not appear in the Western liturgies. So naturally those concerns do not feature in the CSI liturgy too! If they do not become matters of prayer how can the congregations be moved to think and act to counter such issues? A people who are nourished on a bland and other-worldly liturgical diet cannot but be oblivious of their social environment. Are there any vested interests that keep the religion and society apart by manipulating the liturgy of the church?

f. The liturgy of the CSI should encourage lay participation:

The liturgical movement has emphasized the need to involve the laity in the eucharistic worship. As it was noted in the previous chapter, Vatican II is unequivocal on this issue.⁷⁵ *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* calls for the "full, conscious, and active participation" of the laity, which is "their right and duty by reason of their baptism."⁷⁶ The document advocates a considerate approach to the active participation of the laity mindful of their "age and condition," "way of life," and "degree of religious culture" (Section 19).⁷⁷ Sec. 48 discourages passive presence of the liturgy at the Eucharist. Instead worshippers should participate in the worship "knowingly, devoutly, and actively." They should heartily join in the liturgy, listen to the Word of God and partake of the sacrament.

This is an ideal for the CSI to pursue. Its liturgy must enable all sections of the laity, men, women, and children, the young and the old, to join heartily in the celebration of the

⁷⁴ Samuel Rayan, "Outside the Gate, Sharing the Insult," in *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Liberation*, ed., Felix Wilfred (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992) 143.

⁷⁵ See above, Chap. 1, sec. 1.3.1.

⁷⁶ "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," sec. 14, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 144.

⁷⁷ "Constitution," sec. 19, *ibid.*, 145.

Eucharist and exercise their God-given gifts to the glory to God. All communities, Dalits and tribals included, must have an equal role and equal participation. The objective is that that all may be reconciled to God and with one another and that all may enter into communion with God and participate in God's mission.

g. The liturgy must have clarity and simplicity:

In view of the increased emphasis on the full and intelligent lay participation, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* insists on the need for clarity in all parts of the liturgical text and in the rites. It says, "In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify. Christian people, as far as possible, should be able to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively as befits a community."⁷⁸ The same insistence on lucidity and clarity is found in Sections 34, 50, and 54 of the *Constitution*. The aim is to ensure the full and conscious participation of the laity.

The formulators of the CSI liturgy have also expressed the concern for the participation of every one in the liturgical action. It means simplicity, clarity, adaptability, and scope for congregational participation. Bishop Garrett, one of the architects of the CSI liturgy, says,

The liturgical productions of the CSI should be adaptable --- perhaps more adaptable than they are --- to the worship of the smallest and most backward group of the faithful, in their manward aspect of declaring God's Word to His people and binding them together in a fellowship of witness, and in their Godward aspect giving expression to the Church's fundamental faith and self-offering in a form which the simplest can comprehend.⁷⁹

Liturgy must cater to ordinary people living in the most difficult circumstances. It must enable them to lift up to God their needs, problems and aspirations. For God is concerned about the smallest individual on earth.

h. The liturgy must instruct and edify:

The liturgy has an important pedagogical role. Westerhoff and Willimon argue that liturgy is a significant means of imparting Christian nurture. They say, "The Sunday liturgy of the church and in particular the actions persons perform during that ritual express and shape

⁷⁸ "Constitution," sec. 21, *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷⁹ T.S. Garrett, *Worship in the CSI* (London: Lutterworth, 1958) 11.

their perceptions, understandings, and ways of life.”⁸⁰ So they stress the importance of catering to the catechetical needs of the whole family of God, of the young and the old, of parents and children in the liturgical worship on Sunday. They also argue for giving communion to children so that they may be able to enter into the eucharistic experience and accompanying catechesis more fully, for the “eucharistic catechesis is not a one-time program but a lifelong event.”⁸¹ The total experience of community worship has a great role in Christian nurture. The atmosphere of worship, the experience of listening to the Word of God, and receiving the sacrament -- these are all powerful means of imbibing the Gospel message. According to Westerhoff and Willimon,

At the centre of the church's life is the biblical story. Whenever and wherever that story and our story come together, human life is transformed and formed by Christian faith.... Sunday worship is the focal point in our lives. The Scripture is at the heart of that liturgy. Children, youth, and adults should focus their catechesis on the biblical story if the liturgy is to enhance and enliven our faith and lives and if our catechesis is to be relevant to the Gospel.⁸²

They suggest practical ways for the parishes to enhance the pedagogical aspect of the liturgy. These include ways of making every part of the liturgy intelligible to the participants, involving them physically and emotionally in the worship, of making worship a ‘celebration’ of the victory of God, and of making effective use of audio-visual means and the rich resources of the arts for effective communication during the worship.⁸³

Mark Searle, in his article on “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,”⁸⁴ appreciates the attention paid to the pedagogical aspect of the liturgy by Westerhoff and others but he is disappointed that their acceptance of the church's pedagogy is ‘uncritical and unreflexive.’⁸⁵ Searle on the other hand tries to discover “how the liturgy might be capable of exercising a critical role in the larger life and mission of the church.” For this purpose he makes use of a pedagogical tool developed by the Latin American educator, Paulo Freire, namely, the “pedagogy of the oppressed.” Searle proposes the development of what he calls a “critical liturgy.” The procedure involves two activities: firstly, assessing the oppressive and liberative elements in the present liturgies; and, secondly, using the liturgy for

⁸⁰ John Westerhoff and William Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980) 41.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 44, 47-52.

⁸⁴ Mark Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” *Worship* 55 (1981) 332-359.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

‘conscientisation.’⁸⁶ Searle argues that the liturgy must be a tool of the liberative power of the Gospel. This is important since the liturgy can play an effective role enabling the worshippers to experience in their personal life the liberating message of the Gospel.

- i. The CSI liturgy should stress the quality of liturgical action as genuine art:

A great liturgy is a great work of art. Without recourse to the arts, liturgy cannot be celebrated. Liturgy is a total experience that involves the body, mind and soul. In order to attract, involve, and maintain corporate participation, liturgical action needs to be expressed by means of words, actions, signs and symbols that are clear, attractive and interesting. Clarity, beauty and entertainment are qualities of art.

Today much of the church’s worship is not celebration, but rather cerebral exercise. Worship that does not entertain does not attract attention. Worship that does not appeal to the emotions does not influence attitudes. Worship that neglects art is weak in its communication and barren in its outcome.

J.D. Crichton writes about the nature of worship in the primitive communities where worship “engaged the whole being of a person.” He would describe such worship in these words:

Actions, gestures, symbols expressive of a reality they could but dimly grasp, song, and dance were the means they felt necessary to express their worship. They went to meet what they conceived to be reality with the whole of their being, and if reality was to be glimpsed through symbolic gestures, that is the way they would have it. It was in accordance with their nature. In any case, they were in touch, or wished to be in touch, with a reality that went beyond the values of this world and that could best be apprehended by poetry (*poiesis*) and drama, a *dromenon*, an action in which they were involved.⁸⁷

The modern church can, of course, carry on the spirit of the primitive community by enabling the church to make use of its imagination, its artistic skills, its mental, physical, and spiritual faculties to lift up to God its praise, its prayers, and its petitions on behalf of the world.

- j. The liturgical action must be a celebration:

The Eucharist is celebration of the victory of Christ. It is the unfettered rejoicing of the redeemed community that would never succumb to the power of evil. It is their resounding proclamation of faith and hope. In the words of Westerhoff and Willimon,

⁸⁶ Ibid., 349.

The Eucharist is a victory celebration for God's mighty work in Christ --- not a sad funeral for a departed friend. Too many of our people still approach Communion as an intensely private, individualized affair --- a kind of Sunday Rite of Penance. This distorts the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a communal, corporate, family affair.⁸⁸

The Eucharist is the joyous celebration of free people who have committed themselves to the liberation of the oppressed. They look forward with hope to the fullness of freedom in the coming Kingdom of God.

2.5. Conclusion

The liturgical life of the Church of South India needs urgent revival. In the first part of this chapter, the merits and demerits of the three eucharistic liturgies of the church were discussed. It was found that today the CSI is in need of a liturgy that has close affinities to the life, struggles, and the mission of the people of God. The church needs a liturgy that reflects the best of India's spirituality and culture. The second part showed how the different Kerala dioceses celebrate the Eucharist and how their members approach and experience the Lord's Supper. It was found that the eucharistic piety fell short of effective social witness and active resistance of the dark and oppressive forces operating in the society. The church therefore is in need of a liturgy that will enable and empower the church to rise far above spiritual complacency and to engage in the great mission of God, by confronting the needs, problems and issues of the larger society. The last part of the chapter suggests some guiding principles for envisioning a genuine liturgical renewal in the Church of South India.

The assessment of the present state of the liturgical life of the CSI sets the stage for launching a process of liturgical renewal. Here one searches for viable means and methods for a liturgical renewal. It is at this juncture that one comes across the phenomenon of People's Theatre that offers a convincing methodology for enlivening the church's liturgy, by enlisting popular participation and building awareness at the grass roots level.

⁸⁷ J.D. Crichton, "A Theology of Worship," in *The Study of Liturgy* (1993), 8-9.

⁸⁸ ⁸⁸ Westerhoff and Willimon, *Liturgy and Learning through the Life Cycle*, 49.

Chapter Three

PEOPLE'S THEATRE SHOWS THE WAY: OPEN THE HEART, OPEN THE MIND

... Theatre is basically a critical debate, raising serious questions and asking for answers, while it entertains and educates at the same time.

-- M.K. Raina¹

3.1. Introduction

It was stressed in the last chapter that the liturgical forms of the Church of South India have several deficiencies and that they do lack a certain vitality to match the challenges of a growing Indian church. What can inject new life and enthusiasm into the worship of the church? What can encourage greater participation of the young and the old, of ordinary men and women in worship? What can liberate the congregations from their often cloistered and agoraphobic existence and make them joyful witnesses to the Kingdom? Such questions prompt the search for a viable means for liturgical renewal.

It is suggested at this juncture that India's "People's Theatre" qualifies as an excellent means to revive the liturgy and to achieve its objectives. People's Theatre is an educational, developmental, and political theatre that is being used in modern times for the self-instruction and conscientisation of the oppressed in India and in many other countries in the South. It has a convincing theoretical framework and a realistic practical curriculum that are applicable to the realm of liturgical action. The theatre principles evolved by Bertolt Brecht, the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire, and the dramaturgy of Augusto Boal underlie the practice of the modern people's theatre. In the Indian context, it has been fine-tuned by the contributions of such stalwarts as Utpal Dutt, Badal Sircar, and Habib Thanvir. People's Theatre is a persuasive medium that appeals to the hearts and the minds of ordinary people and actively involves them

¹ M.K. Raina, "Marginalisation of Indian Theatre," *The Hindu Folio* (Feb. 1998): 47.

in dramatic action. This chapter outlines the nature, influence, strengths and weaknesses of People's Theatre and its suitability as a fund of resources for liturgical renewal in the CSI, Kerala.

3.2. The Church and the Theatre

One may wonder whether the Church should employ something as secular as the theatre for its liturgical renewal. Such hesitation is not surprising in the case of the People's Theatre, which is being increasingly employed by political activists to bring about social or political change. Traditionally the church in Kerala has been wary of the theatre. The Protestant denominations in particular have distanced themselves from the performing arts mainly on account of the associations of the latter with immorality, hedonism, and with Hinduism. But in the past few decades there has been a certain softening of the church's stand with theatre especially in the urban congregations in Kerala where some drama is being used in the service of Christian education and evangelism. Moreover of late some of the evangelical churches in Kerala have evinced unprecedented interest in drama as a tool of mission.

The CSI owes its guarded attitude to the theatre to its Protestant heritage. The Protestant churches are on the whole suspicious of display and histrionics in the area of worship. They stand in the true tradition of the Reformers who were known for their negative attitude to the use of the arts in the church. Earey comments:

At the time of Reformation drama and ritual in worship were viewed with suspicion and largely outlawed. Worship in Spirit and truth was deemed not to need such outward manifestations and, indeed, the outward manifestation was viewed by the Reformers as largely superstitious and sub-Christian.²

But the Reformers were in fact responding to unhealthy tendencies within the church where, on account of mindless practice, religious rituals had degenerated into a sort of magic. There were many idolatrous practices and superstitions connected with ritual worship. So, the Protestant church went to the extreme of practically rejecting the dramatic, pedagogical and communicational merits of dramatic rituals. Consequently Christian communication was seen purely as an intellectual enterprise that has nothing to do with art and artistry. Protestant

² Mark Earey, *Worship as Drama* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997) 12.

religiosity degenerated into a barren exercise that articulates abstract truths in wordy formulations. Killinger laments,

The church has ... largely lost its sense of drama. Its liturgy no longer enspells or enraptures, catching men up into new cosmic visions or attitudes. There is not even much excitement any more about the Eucharist which is essentially a dramatic enactment of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice. The feeling for the divine struggle, with worshippers taking part in the action, has given way in the main to a prosaic repetition of doctrines and words ...³

This seems to be a widespread phenomenon in Protestant circles. The outright denial of the physical, visual, sensory, and imaginative facets of human life can result only in a narrow and parochial perception of realities.

But today there is a change of attitude in many circles where purely intellectual forms of Christian communication are frowned upon. The faith of the church takes its origin from the biblical narrative that is resplendent in the rituals and practices of the Jews, the meaningful symbolism of the prophets, and the eloquent parabolic actions of Jesus. Therefore the church will reap gains if it recovers its narrative style and dramatic symbolism. Dramatic rituals could enlarge one's area of vision, deepen one's religious experience and open one's heart and mind to receive and respond to the Word of God more readily. Worship and ritual help one to perceive with the eyes, listen with the heart, and experience with the whole being, the movement of the Spirit of God in the material and the temporal facets of human life. Therefore Roger Grainger calls rituals "demonstrated theology."⁴ Of course, liturgy is not just theatre. But a good liturgy is a richly symbolic and artistic performance that appeals to the senses and touches the heart before it heals the mind and calms the spirit. Driver says,

Theatricality is not, of course, the whole of public worship. Liturgy cannot be reduced to theatre without loss of its reason for being. But neither can it be purified of all theatrical elements. It is performance through and through; and if it refuses lovingly to embrace its kinship with theatrical performance, it will grow as ill as people who refuse to affirm and care for their own bodies.⁵

³ John Killinger, *Leave It to the Spirit: Commitment and Freedom in the New Liturgy* (London: SCM Press, 1971) 91.

⁴ Roger Grainger, *The Language of the Rite* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1974) 47.

⁵ Tom F. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991) 83.

Therefore the church has to rethink its approach to the performing arts, especially to the theatre. Theatre offers the church a very rich means of communication for use in the worship and the mission of the church. It possesses power to effect change in human attitudes. Martin Esslin sees a clue to the persuasive power of the theatre in its capacity to generate intense “emotional experience.” Esslin says,

The ability and the power of drama to create an emotional experience of the utmost intensity, akin to religious or mystical ecstasy, an experience that may become a climactic turning point in an individual’s life, and transform that individual, or conversely a deeply unsettling experience like that which Hamlet inflicted upon his uncle, is the true measure of its importance in the fabric of our lives, our society and our culture, the true extent of the ‘very cunning of the scene.’⁶

If the church and its worship give primary importance to transforming lives, if its mission is to pray for change and transformation in the society in accordance with its vision of the Kingdom of God, then the church has to be on the lookout for effective and relevant media like the theatre.

Theatre is a popular form of cultural expression that has helped traditional societies to maintain their identity and unity, to safeguard social customs and practices, and to affirm their established religious and ethical values in a changing world.⁷ Esslin says,

Drama has become one of the principal means of ideas and even, more importantly, modes of human behaviour in our civilisation: drama provides some of the principal role models by which individuals form their identity and ideals, sets patterns of communal behaviour forms values and aspirations, and has become part of the collective fantasy life of the masses....⁸

Theatre enables the participants, both the performer and the spectator, to look at reality from various angles and to acquire an objective grasp of its truth. Where there are conflicting points of view, it offers a stage or a setting for dialogue and debate. In the process it is able to sharpen the mind and clarify the vision. Theatre involves the total person and engages the physical, spiritual, and mental aspects of the human personality. Theatre is essentially related to ritual because ritual has the structure of the theatre. As Grimes says,

⁶ Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1987) 177.

⁷ See Judith A. Weiss, et al., *Latin American Popular Theatre: The First Five Centuries* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1993) 22.

⁸ Esslin, *The Field of Drama*, 13.

Ritual and drama are dance partners. Whether observed historically, in terms of their origin and development, or phenomenologically, in terms of their structures and dynamics, ritual and drama circle one another in a dialectical two-step characteristic of coinciding opposites.⁹

This is especially true in the case of the Christian ritual of the Eucharist, which is basically dramatic in nature. Drama is not extraneous to the Bible; on the contrary, as indicated in the following section, the biblical narrative is dramatic to the core. The church's reservations regarding theatre are based on its criticism of the disparate moral and ethical standards of the theatre world. But the church could turn the best elements of the theatre to its own advantage, for the rejuvenation of the church's worship and for the strengthening of its mission.

3.3. Biblical background: Drama in the Fourth Gospel

In biblical history and narrative drama has been used as an effective medium of instruction. The Old Testament prophets used drama to present God's message to his people in symbolic terms. Jesus used drama in his public ministry to validate the truth of his message.¹⁰ His miracles were enacted parables having high dramatic content (cf. Mt. 12:28). Moreover the biblical narratives of the Last Supper, crucifixion, and the resurrection appearances have apparent dramatic features.

⁹ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982) 165.

¹⁰ Richard A. Batey in an interesting article, "Jesus and the Theatre," (*New Testament Studies* 30, 1984, 563-574) argues that Jesus was probably acquainted with the Greek theatre of his day and used this knowledge effectively in his communication. He bases his surmise primarily on Jesus' use of the word "hypocrite" (ὑποκριτής = actor) which specifically referred to a stage actor. The word is found only in the Gospels and always in the sayings of Jesus. It is used 17 times and seems to be part of the early oral tradition and the authentic sayings of Jesus. Jesus used the term to censure the Jewish religious leaders for their religious pretences; he compared them to the Greek play-actor who pretended to be someone he was not and who performed to please the crowd. Batey points to a theatre that existed in the former Hellenistic Roman city of Sepphoris just six kilometres north-west of Nazareth, remains of which were unearthed in 1931 (p. 565). He suggests that Jesus, as a youth growing up in Nazareth, must have been acquainted with the Greek theatre and the manners of actors. He also suggests that Jesus might have picked up his skill to address and hold the attention of large crowds from the performances of Greek actors (ibid., 572.). Although this is a pure hypothesis, there is a point in the argument that Jesus was probably aware of the ways of Greek actors.

The Fourth Gospel throws light on the dramatic element in Jesus' ministry. This Gospel underscores the great concern of Jesus to "*do* the will of God." In other words, by means of symbolic and dramatic actions, Jesus physically demonstrates the implications of yielding one's self to the divine will and purpose.

Conversely, there is a remarkable stress on expressions that imply "showing" and "seeing" which are keys to the dramatic structure of the Gospel. Jesus expects that those, who have eyes to *see*, might believe and experience God's salvation (9:39). Therefore the Fourth Evangelist records that John the Baptist *saw* and believed (Jn. 1:33f.). The disciples *saw* and believed (1:35-46; 1 Jn. 1:1f.). When his would-be disciples asked him where he lived, Jesus wants to show them where and how he lived, and what kind of person he was. "Come and *see*", he tells them (v. 39). Later, Andrew testifies, "We have *found* him!" So does Philip tell Nathaniel; he says "Come and *see*!" (v.46).

Well-structured drama underlies Jesus' miracles, which the Evangelist terms "signs (σημεία);" their purpose is to help people to *see* and believe. The miracles are done or performed so that God's glory may be made "manifest" (cf. 9:3 -- φανερωθῇ). The first sign, for example, *reveals* his glory and consequently the disciples believe in him (2:11; cf. 9:39; 20:30-31). Jesus calls the miracles "works" (ἔργα) which bear witness to him (5:36; 10:32, 37f.; 14:11). But then there are those who are blind to these manifestations of his glory (cf. 6:30). According to Jesus, such blindness is indeed God's judgement upon their hard-hearted disposition (12:40). On the other hand, there are also people like the inquisitive Greeks who wished to *see*. Jesus seems to be moved at the request of the Greeks; for, the glory is hidden in Jesus, just as the rich bounty of a harvest is hidden in a handful of grains. It would be unravelled soon enough since "the hour" has come (12:21). Later Jesus is found affirming that anyone who has *seen* him has *seen* the Father (14:9). Similarly Jesus challenges Mary of Bethany to exercise her faith in order that she may *see* God's glory (11:40; cf. 11:15). Faith is a kind of seeing.

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus not only performs the signs, but also engages in symbolic actions like the Cleansing of the Temple, Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and Washing of the disciples' feet. They are prophetic and symbolic means of showing forth the dimensions of the new life available to human kind in Christ both at individual and corporate levels. All these actions have

the makings of great drama. They are deliberate acts in defiance of the values and authority in the existing system. They carry powerful messages that have universal implications.

The extraordinary presentation of the Last Supper in the Fourth Gospel is thought provoking, having the qualities of a 'super classic theatre.' It is a cosmic drama with scenes and behind-the-scenes realities. The premise, the scenes, the actors, the protagonist, the antagonist, the structure, the crises, the climax, and the conclusion are all clearly definable. But that is not the only reason why it has been staged over and over again across the centuries all over the world. It is pre-eminently a proclamation of the message of salvation. In the Last Supper scene, the Fourth Evangelist presents the truth of Jesus' person, ministry and mission in a narrative couched in rich dramatic symbolism.

The Fourth Evangelist has devoted a large portion of his narrative (five chapters: Jn. 13-17) to Jesus' words and actions related to the Last Supper which shows the importance of the event. It is a moving narrative of a symbolic ritual having significant theological overtones. It must be seen against the backdrop of the events that led to that night; in fact the whole public ministry of Jesus provides its *mise-en-scene*. But, as was noted earlier, in contrast to the narrative of the Synoptic Gospels, the words of the institution (that symbolise the great sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the world) are missing in the Johannine account.¹¹ But strikingly enough, in the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus illustrates in an entirely different manner his role in the redemption of the world, which is the role of the 'servant of God' (Isa. 53). By giving special attention to Jesus' action of washing the disciples' feet on the night of the Last Supper, the Fourth Evangelist is expressing a liturgical freedom that does not limit the church's anamnesis to the breaking of the bread. The church will bring Jesus' sacrifice to the world's memory by acts of humble service as well. Such acts now possess a sacramental quality reminding the world of Jesus and his sacrifice for human salvation. The church is challenged to show the world the truth of the gospel by means of lowly and selfless service.

¹¹ See above, Chapter 1, sec. 1.2.1.1.

In this manner the Fourth Evangelist effectively illustrates in rich dramatic imagery the total submission of Jesus to the Father's will. The consequence is that God reveals his glory through the person of Jesus and the events of his life in order that people may see and believe.¹²

This brief discussion of the various attitudes in the church towards the theatre and about the significant role of drama in the ministry of Christ now leads to an examination of the scope of the People's Theatre as a means of liturgical renewal.

3.4. The Phenomenon of the People's Theatre

The term, "People's Theatre," has been used in different contexts. One must distinguish between the different connotations of the term in the affluent societies in the North and in the poor communities in the South. In the affluent societies it refers to all kinds of popular entertainment ranging from street circus to vaudeville to performances of community theatre that cater to the interests of people belonging to the lower strata of society.¹³ It is called 'People's Theatre' or 'popular theatre' in English-speaking countries, *Theatre Populaire* in France, and *Volksbühne* in Germany.¹⁴ But in the developing countries 'People's Theatre,' 'popular theatre,' or 'theatre for development' denotes specifically the theatre for liberation which is employed by the "workers, peasants, the oppressed, the minorities, women, children, the unemployed, the

¹² The risen Lord shows himself to Mary Magdalene and to the disciples. He made a special appearance for the sake of the 'doubting Thomas.' It is recorded that Jesus performed before his disciples many other signs apart from the ones recorded in the Gospel (20:30). These were all done in order that they may believe. On the contrary, Christ tells Thomas, in no uncertain terms, that it is more blessed to believe in Christ without being physically able to see him in action (20: 29). In such case faith gives a person the vision of Christ; but Thomas was found wanting in the crucial factor of faith.

¹³ David Dryer says:

Those described by these terms are the factory workers, shopkeepers, labourers, the rural and urban poor and middle classes. Their theatres are the boulevards, sports palaces, exhibition halls, fairgrounds, market places, shearing grounds, threshing floors and forest clearings. Their dramas are not often preserved in written form.... But their dramas reflect with phenomenal accuracy the nominal values and ideals of the societies that produced them. In these dramas we find the valid myths and fantasies that express the dynamics and ethos of their society. See "Towards a Definition of Popular Theatre," in *Western Popular Theatre*, eds. David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (London and N.Y.: Methuen, 1977) 263.

¹⁴ Clive Barker, "Alternative Theatre/ Political Theatre" in *The Politics of Theatre and Drama*, ed. Graham Holderness (London: Macmillan, 1992) 19.

old”¹⁵ for building self-awareness, to analyse social structures and dilemmas, and to find solutions for their burning issues.

This research focuses on the People’s Theatre or the theatre for liberation as found in the countries in the South. In these countries, People’s Theatre is being increasingly employed by communities of the poor and oppressed to deepen their awareness of their socio-economic and political predicament, to devise strategies for liberation and to engage in the struggle for social justice. It is a theatre for conscientisation and liberation. It is pure theatre that uses human faculties rather than technical or technological means for dramatic expression. Its performances are not dependent on the paraphernalia, like costumes, and lighting, stage, or elaborate settings.¹⁶ People’s Theatre does not demand stunning skills, exceptional physical endowments, or technical qualifications on the part of the performers; having them is beneficial but they are not absolute prerequisites for participation. On the other hand, it primarily depends on the unity and commitment of the performers and their passion to share their message through the medium of the theatre. People’s Theatre is totally adaptable to local conditions and makes the best of available resources. According to Jacob Srampickal, “The aim of this theatre is for people to build up their communities by discovering their own cultural identity and analysing ways and means of countering their basic problems.”¹⁷

“People’s Theatre” is a generic name for several varieties of didactic theatre. Included in this family there are an assortment of theatres varying from the street theatre of Badal Sircar to the interactive theatre of Augusto Boal. But the varieties of People’s Theatre are held together by a common concern for bringing about change in unjust and oppressive social structures and conditions. In that process they also revolt against the domesticating influence of traditional theatre and media, which perpetuate the injustices in the society. The notable quality of the People’s Theatre is its method of encouraging the active participation of the audience in their performances, for it is the fate of these people that the theatre is concerned with.

¹⁵ Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Power of People’s Theatre in India* (London: Hurst & Co., 1994; and New York: St Martin’s Press, 1994) 35

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

The new People's Theatre evolved in the sixties in the Third World countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (It is "new" in the sense that its purpose and methodology is new although its theatrical resources are as old as traditional theatres and folk culture). It is in total agreement with the Brechtian concept that theatre should appeal to the intellect rather than to the emotions. It finds common ground with schools of adult education, which insist that the curriculum must be derived from the people. It exemplifies the cardinal principles of communication that emphasise the dialogical, participatory and democratic nature of good communications. Paradoxically, in this age of communications, millions of people are being divested of their right to communicate. The ownership of the media, newspaper, radio, and TV, are being taken over by powerful monopolies, rich multi-nationals, and other vested interests whose concerns do not reflect the problems, needs, or aspirations of the common people. The People's Theatre, on the contrary, is a unique and notable phenomenon in the area of alternative communications. It is one of the few instruments available to people at the grass-root level today to tell their stories to one another and to the world at large. It enables them to express their protest against their oppressors and to share their vision of a new society. They have at their disposal a powerful means to assert their rights, to demand justice, to weave a new solidarity around the globe, and to make their voices heard above the din and clatter of modern communications.

People's Theatre is a theatre of the people, by the people, for the people. It takes its origin among people who are in need by voicing and responding to those needs. By means of People's Theatre people question their own plight and investigate the reasons of their misery, poverty, ignorance, and powerlessness.¹⁸ People's Theatre is a collective activity, which contributes to the identity, unity and purpose of the community; having become aware of their concrete historical situation, people determine to mobilise their energies to achieve their goals. It is usually staged in the streets, fields, market venues, or other places where people gather. It is participatory at every stage of its development and presentation. It goes from strength to strength drawing on the feedback of the people, refining and sharpening its message after each performance.

¹⁸ Carlos Gaspar, et al, *Creative Dramatics: Trainers' Manual* (Hongkong: Plough Publications, 1981) 20.

The main concern of People's Theatre is development, as the phrase 'theatre for development' implies. "Development really means developing people;"¹⁹ it is total human development which results in a change of "environment including ... social and economic development."²⁰ In this aspect, theatre has a crucial role to play. Jacob Srampickal²¹ highlights the strengths of the theatre as a tool of development. First of all, Srampickal argues, the potential of the theatre is its "live experience" and its face-to-face communication. Secondly, indigenous theatre can promote "cultural expressions into the psyche and the value systems of the people." Thirdly, he points out that theatre is a valuable educational tool for transferring information and building awareness.

According to Michael Etherton,²² the main objectives of the People's Theatre are two: firstly, to boost the self-confidence of local communities and to help them value their own ways of acquiring knowledge; and secondly, "to give them access to a wider social and political analysis."²³ People's Theatre promotes conscientisation, and offers the opportunity to put to test ideas and insights for liberation. Etherton emphasises the value of the participatory theatre that articulates and garners the insights of the whole group to its great advantage.

According to Brecht, theatre is a medium of critical insight; for Grotowski, it is an arena of encounter with reality. Building on such insights, the new version of the People's Theatre has grown into a tool of conscientization for common people. In Latin America, Asia and Africa, people at the grassroots are discovering its possibilities as a medium for self-education, self-expression, and social transformation. In the Philippines, deprived peasants are using popular theatre to voice their protest against unjust sugar barons, in Bangladesh landless labourers are using it to organise themselves against oppressive landlords; in Kerala, India, People's Theatre has become an eye-opener for illiterate adults.

¹⁹ Genaro V. Ong Jr., 'An Introduction to DevCom,' *Communication and Development*, ed. Conrado O. Benitez (Manila: Communication Foundation for Asia, 1981) 90.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 18.

²² Michael Etherton, "Popular Theatre for Change: From Literacy to Oracy," *Media Development* 35/3 (1988) 2-4.

²³ Ibid., 2.

3.4.1. The People's Theatre in the Third World

Although there are active People's Theatre movements in many countries in the South, on account of space constraints only the Philippine and the Kenyan examples outside India²⁴ are quoted in this section.

3.4.1.1. *Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA)*

The most celebrated example among the People's Theatre groups in the Philippines is the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA). It is an amateur theatre group, which makes use of drama as an educational tool as well as an instrument for social change. Based in Metro Manila, PETA influences and co-ordinates theatre activities all over the Philippines. It is also playing a role in the South East Asian theatre scene as well.²⁵

PETA was started in 1967 to give voice to the problems, needs and aspirations of the people. From the early days of its history PETA has had close links with grass roots groups in the country. A special milestone in this regard was the workshop for peasants group which PETA was invited to organise in the diocese of Tagum, Davao del Norte. The experience showed "how drama could be used to help people with little or no formal education to gain confidence and express themselves."²⁶ More workshops for grass roots groups followed -- for community health groups, for sugar cane workers, for fishermen, for cottage industry workers, and so on.

²⁴ See *Popular Theatre in Third World*, ed. Rita Allcock (Thunderbay: International Popular Theatre Alliance, 1982).

²⁵ Catherine Diamond refers to the origin, development and the present leadership role of PETA in her article, 'Quest for the Elusive Self: the Role of Contemporary Philippine Theatre in the Formation of Cultural Identity,' *The Drama Review* 40 (Spring 1996) 149.

²⁶ Kathy Lowe, 'Setting the Stage for Social Change: the Philippine Educational Theatre Association,' chap. in *Opening Eyes and Ears* (Geneva: WCC-LWF, London: WACC, 1983) 4.

From the early days, the Roman Catholic Church and its cultural organisations have been working closely with PETA.²⁷ Local Catholic parishes have sponsored most of the village level workshops. Priests and nuns organising labour unions and co-operatives among poor farmers and plantation workers have been keen to learn how to employ drama in their own activities. Some parish groups have developed new forms of liturgical drama that combined social and political messages. Lowe quotes an instance where a community of sugar cane workers gave their *canaculo* (passion play) a political colouring by using a rough cross of sugar cane which infuriated the plantation owners.²⁸

Presently PETA is engaged in co-ordinating different People's Theatre groups in the Philippines so that they may become part of the nationalist movement for liberation. It is estimated that there are more than 400 People's Theatre groups in the Philippines, a hundred of them in Metro Manila alone. PETA acts as a national secretariat for all these groups.

3.4.1.2. *People's Theatre in Kenya*

Ngugi wa Thiongo, a pioneer of People's Theatre in Kenya tells the story of its early beginnings in Kenya.²⁹ The theatre was based in Kamiriithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre. In 1976, a group of ordinary people, "peasants, workers, a school teacher and a business man,"³⁰ started the theatre group. Their aim was "to revive the dramatic tradition of the pre-colonial era," when a rich theatre tradition had flourished. It was "part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community" with colourful rituals and ceremonies.³¹ The British colonialists snuffed out that tradition; they saw it as a subversive activity, which could ignite rebellion in a discontented people. The colonial administrators banned drama and other spontaneous community activities. "Any gathering of the natives needed a license."³² The action was applauded by the Christian missionaries who viewed the local expressions of art and culture as "works of the devil." Now after years of cultural silence the theatre was being

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ngugi wa Thiongo, "The Language of the African Theatre," in *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986; reprint, 1994) 34-62.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³² *Ibid.*

rejuvenated in Kamiriithu. It was felt that the ordinary people must give it leadership, for “the real language of the theatre could only be found among the people – the peasantry in particular – in their life, history and struggles.”³³ The people were encouraged. Ordinary people, totally out of touch with the fine points of theatre practices, flung themselves into action. They were surprised by their own transformation into excellent performers in course of time. They had managed to revive the age-old theatre tradition and their theatre “was a product of themselves and their collective contribution. It was a heightening of themselves as a community.”³⁴

The above two examples were quoted to show that People’s Theatre is a growing, thriving phenomenon in the Third World. It has given voice to the voiceless marginals of the developing countries. It has moulded the scattered, faceless masses into a world-wide solidarity. Their concerted voices have a power and dynamism that can vie with the powerful and sophisticated technology of mass communications. This modern, alternative, grass roots communication phenomenon has wide influence and infinite possibilities.

3.4.2. People’s Theatre in India

India has a very strong theatre tradition that is centuries old dating back to classical Sanskrit theatre.³⁵ There is a rich variety of folk theatre in India, like the *nautanki* of Rajasthan, *Ramlila*, *Krishnalila* and *swang* of Uttar Pradesh, *jatra* of Bengal, *bhavai* of Gujarat; *tamasha* of Maharashtra, *terukoothu* and *pagalvesham* of Tamilnadu, *yakshagana* of Karnataka, *burrakatha* and *veedhinatakam* of Andhra Pradesh and *kathakali* and *thullal* of Kerala.³⁶

India’s People’s Theatre is a modern phenomenon; but its roots can be traced to the early days of Indian political theatre, which is related to the struggle for national independence. Indian theatre has played an important role in the freedom struggle when Indian artists and craftsmen, actors and dancers, poets and singers did their best to awaken the masses, to call them to unity, and to

³³ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁵ *Natyasastra*, the classical Sanskrit treatise on the theatre by Bharata Muni, is supposed to have been written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. See Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962) 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

encourage them to join the struggle for India's freedom. Among them artistes like the great Shahirs Amar Sheikh and Annabhau Sathe in Maharashtra, infused freedom messages into traditional *nautanki* performances with their ballads.³⁷ About the role of the theatre in India's freedom struggle, M.K. Raina says,

... Theatre historically has not been a silent spectator, it survives on keen observation of society, be it traditional or contemporary, underdeveloped or industrial. It may lie low at times but it keeps simmering and explodes at the right moment. The best examples of this can be found in the long freedom struggle, which theatre fought for through its own form and carved a great tradition through playwrights, actors, singers, poets and designers."³⁸

The Indian political theatre is more than a century old. Raina has shown how right from the 1870s the political theatre has been active, playing its role to awaken the masses against the injustices perpetrated by the British imperialists in India.³⁹ In 1875, the Governor General of India was provoked to seek legal action against the play, *Chakradarpan*, that was based on the plight of the tea plantation workers in Assam. This was followed by other plays like *Neel Darpan*, *Gaekwad Natak*, and *Gayanand and the Prince* followed. All these plays contained insinuations and incriminations about the British rule in India. First the British government in India issued an ordinance to ban this kind of play. The theatre activists disregarded it. Then the Government issued an act, namely, the "Dramatic Performances Act (19) of 1876 (Appendix IX I)" which empowered the authorities to imprison the offenders without a hearing⁴⁰ (Unfortunately the act is still in force in the independent India).⁴¹

Raina also refers to the *nautanki* play by Beni Prasad that depicts the cruel tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre; the play was at once banned by the British administration. The dramatists made use of the religious imagery of India to vent their anger against the British. The Telugu play, *Panchala Prabhavamu* was another example.⁴²

³⁷ Meher Pestonji, "Powerful Tool for Social Reform," *The Hindu Folio*, "Theatre" (8 February 1998): 34.

³⁸ M.K. Raina, "Marginalisation of Indian theatre," in *The Hindu Folio*, "Theatre" (8 February 1998): 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

The political theatre had a revival in the productions of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA, or *Gananatya Sangha*).⁴³ Its origins are traced to the manifestation of a 'progressive' or leftist tendency that originated in the 1930's in India, and the publication of 'progressive' poems, stories and plays.⁴⁴ IPTA was started in 1941 in Bangalore by Marxist anti-imperialists during World War II, a period of ruthless oppression in colonial India. The misery of the times was accentuated by a severe famine, which ravaged West Bengal leaving in its trail 3,000,000 dead. The cause was taken up by IPTA and its "street theatre groups toured the country ... raising funds and creating awareness of the man-made nature of the disaster for which the British rulers were squarely held responsible."⁴⁵

In 1944, Bijon Bhattacharya, one of the founders of IPTA wrote the play, *Nabanna* (New Harvest). It dramatised the exploitation of the peasants by landowners, which was the root cause of the famine and the misery. The play was staged on makeshift stages all over Bengal drawing large audiences. This was evidently a revolutionary play in theme as well as in format and it marked a phenomenal transition from the accepted style of Bengali theatre.⁴⁶

IPTA in its theatre activities made elaborate use of historical, mythological, and allegorical themes to communicate contemporary messages. These referred to the caste system, the Hindu-Muslim conflict, dowry system, repression of women, degenerate religious and feudal trends and colonial exploitations. Songs, folk dance, cartoons and posters were employed in addition to drama to awaken the masses. One aim was to arouse mass bitterness against the Axis powers and to glorify world communism. IPTA "sought to convince the masses that they were the masters of their own fate and the repositories of the forces of change."⁴⁷

On the eve of India's independence, the Communist Party of India was denounced for its 'British collaborationist' role of 1942-45, and consequently it marked a period of decline for IPTA. In 1967, IPTA was revived in West Bengal. It was declared that henceforth IPTA would "reflect only the desires and struggles of the proletarian masses, and would be their vanguard in their

⁴³ Kalpana Biswas, 'Political Theatre in Bengal: The India People's Theatre Association,' in Allcock, *Ibid.*, 262-98.

⁴⁴ Adya Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1971) 137.

⁴⁵ Meher Pestonji, "Powerful Tool for Social Reform," 34.

⁴⁶ *Communication Research Trends* 9/1-2 (1988): 7.

⁴⁷ Kalpana Biswas, "Political Theatre in Bengal," 267.

fight for a classless, exploitation-free socialist society.”⁴⁸ These have been the guiding principles of IPTA (West Bengal) ever since.

Today IPTA units of relative strength exist in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Similar and less developed movements are in existence in Tripura, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamilnadu. All of them function under the aegis of the two major communist parties in India. A few examples of other popular theatres of kindred spirit are the following: Association for the Rural Poor (Madras), Social Work and Research Centre (Tilainia), and Centre for Communication and Cultural Action (Calcutta). In addition, there are many political, human rights, ecological, and women’s groups, which use popular theatre to conscientise ordinary people.⁴⁹

Habib Thanvir, who was active in the IPTA in the period between 1946 and 1953 as a playwright, actor and director, was keen to make prodigious use of India’s folk forms. In 1959, he founded the Naya Theatre in his native Chattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh. Tanvir was able to blend into his theatre the lively traditional folk forms of music and dance of Chattisgarh. To this end, he lived and worked with tribal folk performers. In the early 70s, when he made use of the folk arts to highlight the problems of the coal mine workers in the area, a revolutionary kind of theatre evolved that dealt with serious social and economic themes. *Charandas Chor* is the most famous play in his repertoire. According to Pestonji, “his genre does not fit the conventional mould of street theatre but it shares a concern for common people and the objective of creating awareness through theatre.”⁵⁰

Another example of socially conscious theatre is to be seen in the work of K.A. Abbas who wrote and staged the thought provoking street play *Main Kaun Hoon?* (Who Am I?) on the meaninglessness of communal enmity against the backdrop of the bloody clashes between Hindus and Muslims following the Partition in 1947. For the sake of easy staging it did away with conventional techniques. Another popular play on the same theme was R. Ghatak’s *Dolil* (The Written Deed). It used a bare stage and minimum props.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 278.

⁴⁹ Jacob Srampickal, ‘How Audience Shapes Street Theatre in India,’ *Media Development* 40 (1993): 49.

⁵⁰ Meher Pestonji, op. cit., 35.

⁵¹ Balwant Gargi, ibid., 190.

The history of Indian street theatre also is to be seen in this connection. One of the pioneers of the street theatre is Uptal Dutt (1929-92) who later became a doyen of Indian cinema. He was a politically motivated theatre artist who in the 50's started the new drama movement in West Bengal. This was improvised political theatre, which highlighted the pressing socio-economic and political problems of the day.⁵²

The next notable figure in the history of street theatre is Badal Sircar, the founder of the Third Theatre or the Free Theatre, whose concern was to stage a strong alternative to the escapist fare provided by the cinema.⁵³ He is a well-trained theatre artiste who has had close acquaintance with modern trends in the world theatre. He has been especially influenced by Grotowski's Poor Theatre which puts the accent on physical acting and dispenses with the paraphernalia of costumes, lighting, background sets, etc. Badal Sircar has found in Grotowski's theatre a suitable model for Indian street theatre. He has developed the concept of a 'Third Theatre' which uses 'minimal props, informal performance spaces, and improvised dialogue' to provide a low-cost theatre. His *magnum opus* is *Evam Indrajit* (1965).⁵⁴ According to Jayati Bose, Sircar "abandoned the proscenium and began to develop a theatre for *angan mancha*, an intimate space shared by performers and viewers alike."⁵⁵ The purpose was "to eliminate the alienation of the actor from the audience, and thus create the possibility of planting the message of the play more firmly and securely in the consciousness of the spectator."⁵⁶ There is a strong physical element also in Sircar's plays. The body was used "as a medium of expression, individually and collectively, in gestural forms."⁵⁷ Today Sircar continues to engage in theatre experiments in and around Calcutta and in the cities and villages of West Bengal. According to Sircar, "communication between the performers and the spectators on the human level" is the goal of theatre.⁵⁸

⁵² *Communication Research Trends*, *ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Girish Karnad (and Aparna Dharwadker), 'Performance, Meaning, and the Materials of Modern Indian Theatre,' *New Theatre Quarterly* 11 (1995): 370 note.

⁵⁵ Jayati Bose, "Third Theatre Looking Back," *The Hindu Folio* "Theatre" (February 1998): 22.

⁵⁶ Sircar in an article in *Nandanik* (1979), quoted by Jayati Bose, *ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁷ Bose, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Chaman Ahuja, "The Omnipresent Dramatist," *The Hindu*, online edition (24 January 1999).

Sircar's methods have influenced the street theatre movement all over India. He has brought the theatre literally to the person on the street. Unlike the earlier versions of street theatre which was only proscenium theatre staged on the street, Sircar's theatre has presented real street theatre which interacts and involves people and realities on the street.

But Jayati Bose, who has participated in the Sircar theatre workshops, found that they did not totally help remove the age-old barrier between the theatre and the audience. She contends that Sircar's approach did not really transform the theatre into a forum for dialogue where "the exploited could voice their own experience." According to Jayati Bose, Sircar has admitted this limitation of his theatre. Sircar told her in an interview, "... May be it [the theatre-audience divide] cannot be changed, unless we go back to rituals. All that we have been able to achieve is that we have reduced the divide, and there is some satisfaction in that."⁵⁹ Defending himself against the criticism that his theatre focussed on the urban audiences at the neglect of the village audiences, Sircar said, "We do not go to the village audiences to teach them. I would consider it presumptuous.... But ultimately it is for the people of the villages to create their own theatre, in their own languages, in response to their own problems."⁶⁰

The People's Theatre in India has made its beginning and it has contributed to the historical resurgence of the rural masses in several parts of India. IPTA, K.A. Abbas, Bijon Bhattacharya, Utpal Dutt, Habib Tanvir, Badal Sircar and numerous others have nourished its growth and development into a tool of people's self expression and struggle for justice.

3.4.2.1. The Indian street theatre

A popular form of the People's Theatre is the street theatre, which took off from the streets of Bengal to cities and villages all over India. It has become a people's medium for addressing and challenging evil and injustice in the society. It is estimated that there are more than 7,000 active street theatre groups in India today.⁶¹ These exhibit a whole spectrum of interests: politics, gender issues, health education, environmental concerns, human rights, children's rights, media education, universal literacy, and religious education and evangelism are some of them. Among

⁵⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.

the new generation of street theatre exponents the names of Probir Guha (West Bengal), Poornachandra Rao (Andhra Pradesh), Pralayan (Tamil Nadu), and K.J. Baby (Kerala) deserve special mention. Their art has been greatly influential in building awareness and in changing attitudes in both the rural and urban India. There is no better proof for the impact (positive and negative) of the street theatre than the martyrdom of Safdar Hashmi of Jana Natya Manch (JANAM) in January 1989. He was attacked and murdered by a group of politically motivated hooligans who interrupted his street play, *Hulla Bol* while it was being staged in Sahibabad (on the outskirts of Delhi). The hard-hitting criticism directed against criminal politicians in the play had whetted their anger.⁶²

P. Vijayan, commenting on the role of the street theatre and its possibilities as a vanguard of social change, says,

The strength of the street theatre lies in its direct involvement with the people on the street. People are helped to identify with the social or political issue in question. The theatre is not imposed upon the people; rather they willingly become active participants, sometimes playing the role of the Chorus in Greek theatre.⁶³

According to him, the street theatre is a direct and powerful means for edifying people by encouraging them to engage in rational thinking. The street theatre uses simple and low-cost means of communication. Its ways are totally village- and family-oriented. But at the same time it has a clear and universal social task. It presents hard realities on the rough streets. Vijayan believes that the street theatre exemplifies mature political practice.⁶⁴

According to N.R. Gramaprakash,⁶⁵ the street theatre makes use of the street as its stage, employs the language of the street, and deals with the issues of the street in its performance. The

⁶¹ Ibid. This is one of the findings of Jacob Srampickal's doctoral research. See *Communication Trends* 9 (1988) 5, footnote.

⁶² The action was decried by artists and men of letters all over India. The street play was staged in the same place by Hashmi's widow three days after his death. Ten years after his death, Hashmi's memory continues to inspire theatre activists in India and all over the world. Recently scholars, artists, and workers came together to pay tributes to his memory at an international seminar held in New Delhi in connection with his tenth death anniversary. See Vijay Prasad, "Solidarity for Secularism," *Frontline* 16/2 (Jan. 16-29, 1999), online edition.

⁶³ P. Vijayan, "Street Theatre," in *The Theory and Practice of Street Theatre*, (Malayalam), ed. N.R. Gramaprakash (Trichur: Chorus Books, 1993) 93.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁵ N.R. Gramaprakash, "The Aesthetics of Street Theatre," in *The Theory and Practice of Street Theatre*, 114-123.

people, situations, and sounds of the street are part and parcel of the street theatre's vocabulary. Satire and music and mime are profusely used in street theatre to capture and to hold the attention.

Sachidanandan, distinguished Malayali poet and activist, sums up the salient features and the mission of the street theatre thus:⁶⁶

- a. In open contradiction to the ordinary theatre where people go to the theatre to watch the play, here in the case of the street theatre, the theatre goes in search of the people.
- b. The street theatre is a theatre of the poor. It provides for low-cost productions of good theatre. Possibly it is the only type of theatre that truly responds to the economic plight of the ordinary Indian.
- c. Street theatre can expose contradictions in the society and seek solutions to the burning issues of the common people. It can be a convincing alternative to the mass media, which belong to the high-ups.
- d. Street theatre canvasses popular support for novel and original ideas. Ideas, which could be too abstract or monotonous to be put across by means of a lecture or an essay, are presented here in characters and episodes that capture the imagination.

Strampickal spells out some of the qualifications of an effective and wholesome street theatre; according to him, "thematic integrity, emotional depth and portrayal of reality and verisimilitude are some of the requisites, which make social awareness theatre a piece of art."⁶⁷ Its attractiveness lies in its democratic approach. It must therefore continue to "make people aware of situations without forcing them to follow a particular course of action."⁶⁸

3.4.2.2. *The use of street theatre for conscientisation*

The street theatre has proved to be quite effective in bringing about attitudinal change in several parts of India. See for example, the following report in the Indian periodical *Frontline*:⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Sachidanandan, "Why Street Theatre?" in *The Theory and Practice of Street Theatre*, 68-70.

⁶⁷ Strampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 149.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁶⁹ Venkatesh Athreya, "Social Mobilisation for Change," *Frontline* Vol. 15, no. 20, Sept. 26-Oct. 9, 1998, online edition.

In 1998, the Area Health Care Project of the state government of Tamil Nadu (in South India), with the assistance of the Danish International Development Authority, launched an intensive campaign to conscientise the villagers in the backward district of Dharmapuri about the welfare of women and female infants. The general status of the women in the district was pathetic. According to the report,

Its rural female literacy rate, as per the 1991 Census, was 31.3 per cent, well below the State average of 41.8 per cent. Its rural sex ratio in 1991 was 941 females per 1,000 males for the general population. Its rural female IMR [infant mortality rate] of 130.8 in 1995 was more than twice the State average of 57.3, and almost twice the district's rural male IMR of 69.

The heinous social practice of female infanticide accounts for the high female IMR of the district, where the male child is preferred to the female child. As a result there is a widespread practice of inducing the death of the unwanted female infant in Tamil Nadu. Statistics reveal that in Dharmapuri district alone "from 1994 to 1997, more than 1,000 female infants were killed annually. These accounted for more than half the female infant deaths in the district. The practice cuts across all castes."⁷⁰

The main task force of the health-awareness campaign consisted of eighteen street theatre groups (*kalaipayanam* in Tamil), one for each block. The street theatre workshops, which involved members of the community including women, were conducted under the guidance of experienced artistes and animateurs. The workshops focused on "women's empowerment and community participation in health." When one looks at the agenda messages the groups were entrusted with, it would seem to be a tall order. Athreya reports:

The skits and songs touched upon such themes as violence against women in the form of so-called 'eve-teasing,' early marriage and frequent child births, which violate not only the right to reproductive choice but the right to education and employment; dowry; the preference for sons and the wider context of patriarchy, which provides a basis for the practice of female infanticide; the need to access antenatal care and go in for institutional delivery to minimise the risk of maternal death; the need for male participation in reproductive and sexual health; the exploitative character of commercialised private health care; and the right of people to access public primary health care.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

In order to saturate Dharmapuri district with the messages, these groups undertook about 3,000 street performances, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes. All these were done with maximum community participation. The community not only involved itself in the organisation of the campaign, but also in the discussions that followed the skits and the songs. According to a newspaper report (*The Hindu*, Friday, October 16, 1998), the campaign was a thundering success. There was “an impressive increase in the demand for health care” in the area. “The outpatient attendance at the primary health centres” had recorded a phenomenal increase. “The number of institutional deliveries” had increased. The local communities had come forward offering a free land for the construction of health centres. It is too early to assess the impact of the campaign on infanticide and other superstitious practices but positive change in attitude in those areas cannot be ruled out.

These examples show that the People’s Theatre has been a powerful influence in the areas of awareness-building and social and political education in India. It has become an accepted and effective means of grassroots level communication all over India through the pioneering and creative efforts of people like Habib Thanvir and Badal Sircar. The street theatres, for example, have become quite powerful means of expressing the felt needs of the people. These are led by ordinary people who make use of the rich cultural heritage of India’s music, dance and drama in their playmaking. The focus now shifts to the Kerala scene where the theatre movement has been remarkably influential.

3.4.3. People’s Theatre in Kerala

Kerala⁷² is rich in arts and crafts. Among the temple arts, Kerala’s *kathakali*, which is a highly stylised form of theatre combining elaborate idiom of mime and dance, is world- famous. Apart

⁷² Kerala is a tiny state on the western coast of south India. It has a land area of 38,863 square kilometres and a population of 30 million (It has the highest population density among the Indian states). Kerala is different from the other Indian states for several reasons. High literacy is one of the indications; in 1991, the state achieved total literacy, the first Indian state to achieve that status.⁷² People are politically enlightened. The Marxist party is the strongest political party, and the present state government is a leftist coalition led by the Marxists. They have been mainly responsible for organising the labour sector and introducing strict measures in wage structure, land reforms and housing policies. As a result, dire poverty is almost non-existent. Women are almost equally educated as the men. Child mortality rate is the lowest in the country. Successive governments in Kerala have been remarkably successful in containing the population growth through the conscientisation of the masses.

from this, there is a rich repertoire of ritual arts like *koodiyattam*, *Krishnanattam*, *thullal*, *chakiarkoothu*, *mohiniyattam*, *thiruvathira*, and so on. There are some 'Christian' arts and 'Muslim' arts too. The so-called 'Christian' arts are forms of performing arts, which have their origin in the distant past. *Margam kali* and *paricha muttu kali* are song-and-dance sequences, which recount the ornate history of the ancient Christians of Malabar. *Chavittunatakam* is a form of ancient 'Christian' theatre that has evolved as a result of Portuguese influence; the themes are based on the stories of European martyrs and other heroes; some consider *chavittunatakam* as an archetype of Kerala theatre. There is also a rich assortment of Christian folk songs and traditional practices related to rites of passage.⁷³

People's theatre in Kerala traces its roots to the heyday of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) more than half a century ago. Under its influence the Communists organised an amateur theatre which soon grew into a professional theatre, namely Kerala People's Arts Club (KPAC). It staged plays written and directed by Thoppil Bhasi. Bhasi's initial play, *Ningal Enne Communistakki* (You've Made Me a Communist!) dealt with the theme of the oppression of landlords and the urgent need for revolutionary land reforms. It became an instant success and was staged in the length and breadth of Kerala before enthusiastic audiences. Bhasi's other plays followed, which reinforced the Marxist ideals cashing in on the social and political discontent rampant in the state during that period. These plays were enormously influential in changing the political landscape of the state; the upshot was that the Communists were voted to power in 1957, Kerala being the first state in the world to have a democratically elected Communist government. KPAC is still active today producing plays on social and political themes.

The main problem the state is facing today is unemployment. Dearth of mineral sources, acute power shortage and the non-availability of cheap labour discourage major industries from setting foot in the state. Although millions of Keralites have migrated to other states and foreign countries to seek their fortunes, over one million in the state are unemployed and a much larger number are underemployed. Kerala has the highest percentage of the educated unemployed in India. The increasing unemployment is one of the major issues facing the state.

⁷³ Patrons of these arts are the Catholic and Orthodox churches; the CSI has turned a blind eye to performing arts in general.

Given below are two examples from the contemporary scene to illustrate in outline the organisation concerns and effectiveness of People's Theatre in Kerala today.

3.4.3.1. *Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)*

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (means 'Science and Literature Forum of Kerala' -- henceforth KSSP) is another successful associate of IPTA. Started in 1962 by a handful of science writers, it has grown today into a mass movement in Kerala with more than fifty thousand members.⁷⁴ At one stage during the course of its development there was a large-scale influx of Marxists into the wings of KSSP, possibly because the party saw this as an effective tool for propagating the Marxist ideology.⁷⁵ Ever since it has functioned as a cultural arm of the Marxist party although it attracts scores of non-Marxist social activists to its campaigns.

KSSP have taken up issues of social relevance like poverty, illiteracy, pollution, health problems, corruption, unethical media practices, the cultural hegemony of the West through global media, the neo-colonialism of multinational companies, and so on. Through a powerful street theatre movement, KSSP have been able to conscientise people to adopt particular attitudes and to align themselves against the 'enemies of the people.' Two of their campaigns achieved remarkable success. One was directed against the state government's move to construct a hydroelectric project that posed danger to an evergreen forest called "the Silent Valley," which is a natural habitat of several rare animals and plant species. In the face of popular resistance organised by the KSSP, in the form of marches, rallies, literature campaign, and street theatre presentations, the government relented and gave up the project. Their second effort was to conscientise the people to achieve total literacy in the state. It resulted in an effective adult literacy campaign. The government and many church denominations, and religious bodies co-operated with KSSP. KSSP [in association with the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI)], led an intensive literacy campaign between 26th January 1989 and

⁷⁴ S. Sivadas, "How Ernakulam Became the First Fully Literate District of India" (Paris: UNESCO-UNICEF-WFP Co-operative Programme, June 1991) 5.

⁷⁵ Mathew Zechariah and R. Sooryamoorthy, *Science for Social Revolution: The Achievements and Dilemmas of a Development Movement: the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994) 67.

8th April 1991.⁷⁶ The campaign was an enormous success drawing international attention. At the end of the campaign, Kerala was declared a totally literate state (90-100%) and KSSP won many accolades. The fine example of KSSP's initiative is being emulated by other Indian states.

The first district to achieve total literacy in the state was Ernakulam. The district collector made available the government network to assist the effort of KSSP. The literacy campaign in the district, which began in January 1989, came to a successful culmination in the declaration of the district as a totally literate district in October 1989.⁷⁷ It was acclaimed as "a new experiment in nation-building enlisting the active co-operation of all concerned, including political parties."⁷⁸ One reason for the success of the Ernakulam District Total Literacy Programme (EDTLP) was its preliminary campaigns to conscientise the public, literate and illiterate. The main vehicles of their messages were the Art and Science Rallies that were held throughout the length and breadth of the district. In these rallies KSSP made extensive use of "folk songs, folk arts, and street dramas."⁷⁹

In 1987 KSSP took initiative to organise a massive "All India Science Rally" (*Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha*) which touched all Indian states within a period of forty days in an intensive effort to spread the message of literacy all over India. Among the participants were a thousand scientists and five thousand teachers.⁸⁰ This rally also made use of folk media and street theatre to attract large crowds of people en route.

The methodology of the KSSP:

The main factors for the effectiveness of KSSP's success as a popular theatre may be summarised as follows:

- a. Its artists are mainly young people who enjoy a better credibility in the society as idealists and dreamers.

⁷⁶ K. E. Eapen, "People's Movement Creates 'total literacy' in Kerala," *Media Development* 38 (1991): 38-39.

⁷⁷ P. Sivadas, "How Ernakulam became....", 5-20.

⁷⁸ Comment of Dr. Michael Tharakan in his evaluation report. See Sivadas, *ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁹ Sivadas, *ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁰ J. Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 140.

- b. It has a relevant message to be communicated.
- c. KSSP have always issues and problems from the point of view of common people. They have considered the common people as the chief actors in social transition. By projecting their fears, by voicing their protest, and codifying their perceptions, KSSP have canvassed unconditional popular support all over the state.
- d. KSSP's theatre is where the people are; the performances take place in the contexts where the people live. KSSP's songs, music, rhythm (using indigenous musical instruments), simple costumes (often attires of the peasant), and simple language have an appeal to common people. KSSP programmes are entertaining; they use a lot of humour, which encourages easy reception of their messages.
- e. Audience participation in the performances is enlisted as a rule.
- f. They make use of local artistes and of popular and folklore resources in all instances.
- g. They interface with the mass media (mainly radio, TV and print media) in their effort to reach distant audiences. These media have popularised and reinforced the work of the KSSP.

The success of KSSP's theatre movement has encouraged many other NGOs to use theatre as a medium of awareness building; for example, the Kerala university students union regularly organises state-wide street drama programmes to fight corruption in high places. Trade unions and political parties have used the same approach to popularise their views.⁸¹

3.4.3.2. *People's Theatre, Valiaveli*

This is a very humble but significant effort by a group of young people belonging to the fishermen's community in Valiaveli, a quiet village on the outskirts of Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. These youths, under the leadership of R. Raju, resolved to organise their theatre

⁸¹ Pradip Thomas in his article 'Indian Popular Theatre Seeks Identity,' *Media Development* 35 (1988): 17, outlines the problems the people's theatre in India faced in the 80's : alienation from the real struggles of the people, lack of expertise in theatre techniques as well as in folk arts which is used as a medium, etc. But these defects cannot be generalised; there are famous exceptions like the KSSP, which are genuinely involved in people's issues and exhibit a high degree of proficiency in organising people's arts.

activities in the shape of a People's Theatre early in 1997. They were a group of talented young people either unemployed or just nominally employed. Just a few of them have a college education; the rest are high school dropouts.

Their theatre is the product of dialogues and discussions within the group and with their neighbours. Their plays mainly concentrate on the problems faced by the fisher-folk, especially on account of the encroachment of fishing trawlers on the coastal waters. These trawlers belong to export-oriented, rich fishing and canning companies. They not only crowd out the small fishing crafts on the coastal sea but also destroy the many varieties of coastal fish totally. The traditional fisher-folk in Kerala have neither the boats nor the equipment to go beyond the coastal waters and to try their luck on the high seas. This situation has resulted in a large-scale unemployment in the coastal area. The fisher-folks' unions have been campaigning and fighting with the government for a total ban on trawling on the coastal waters, but they have been only partially successful. The unemployment in the coastal area has had severe implications for the social life of the fisher-folk and for the social equilibrium in the area. Many among the fisher-folk have turned to the brewing of illicit liquor, bootlegging, and prostitution as alternative occupations. Fights within families, gang fights, and communal clashes punctuate the everyday life in the coastal area. Even very small children are entrapped in the crime net. Debilitating new diseases have appeared. The traditionally peaceful communities of the fisher-folk are turning into breeding grounds of crime and violence posing dangers to the welfare of the whole coastal area. It is in response to these circumstances and issues that the Valiaveli People's Theatre was born.

The theatre group, consisting mainly of local young people, meets three or four times every week to discuss and identify the pressing issues and problems of their community. Once they have identified a major issue, they discuss various ways in which the community can be organised to tackle it. Then they break into groups of two or three youths and each group meet and discuss the issue that has been identified and the solutions that have been proposed with the members of the local community. These informal meetings go on until they have garnered the views of a variety of groups, working people, the unemployed, women, children, the educated and the uneducated, as well as of the church personnel. These views which have been collected from the community are shared with the theatre group. This group work on a scenario in the light of the problems or issues which the community has identified and the solutions which they

have proposed. Scenes are improvised, changes are made, and finally a street play emerges. Appropriate songs, music, and dance are added as demanded by the format of the play. This production is informally presented to members of the local community. The feedback is taken into account and changes are made accordingly. The finished product is then formally presented locally and to communities elsewhere. More changes are made in the light of further feedback.

The members of the People's Theatre, Valiaveli get the assistance of professional theatre groups in the city in the area of theatre training. The group in its turn conduct theatre workshops and help other social action groups and NGOs to develop street plays on social issues.

The repertoire of Valiaveli People's Theatre deals with themes like unemployment, alcoholism, prostitution, illiteracy and exploitation. Their most popular productions in 1998 were "*Arangathekku*" (To the forefront), which deals with the need for reservation of seats in administrative bodies for women and "*Athuratha Perum Manassu*" (A sick mind), which exhorts people to make use of the government's medical care facilities.

Given above are two examples of the organisation, curriculum and effectiveness of popular theatre in the state of Kerala. There are hundreds of such active groups in the state trying to conscientise people about social, political, environmental, health issues and many other topics of contemporary significance. The people of Kerala are familiar with the activities of popular theatres and respond creatively to their messages. These groups have a definite place in Kerala polity as they enable people to debate and to look objectively at issues affecting their common life in a democracy.

3.4.4. Theoretical foundations for the practice of the People's Theatre: the contributions of Brecht, Freire and Boal

The People's Theatre is a didactic theatre based on solid theoretical foundations. It has its roots in the theories of modern dramaturgists and educationalists. For reasons of space the following section lists only three names, those of Brecht, Freire, and Boal. But other influences are not to be ignored. For example, the political theatre of Erwin Piscator, the Theatre of Cruelty of

Antonin Artaud, The Poor Theatre of Jerzy Grotowski have all in one way or another contributed to the development of the new People's Theatre.

But the major contributions came from Bertolt Brecht, Paulo Freire, and Augusto Boal. The dramatic style of People's Theatre owes much to the epic theatre of Brecht, which aimed at the enlightenment and provocation of the audiences in favour of social action. Freire's concept of education as "cultural action for freedom" and his emphasis on conscientisation provide the curriculum for People's Theatre. Boal showed how elements of theatrical technique and educational theory could be combined for use in the Third World. An examination of the contributions of these three authors will provide a picture of the theoretical and artistic underpinnings of People's Theatre. This introduction to the major theorists of the didactic theatre is also intended to justify the use of People's Theatre methodology and formats in the worship of the church. For the use of such methodology is being proposed on the basis of its sound conceptual framework.

3.4.4.1. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

The German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and his influence on the modern theatre have been the subject of numerous studies.⁸² Brecht rebelled against what he called the "culinary theatre"⁸³ which catered only to the sensual gratification of the audiences. Brecht contended that this kind of theatre prevented people from recognising the world as it is. In contrast, he wanted to challenge his audiences through his plays and to provoke them to action to change the world. According to him the basic purpose of the theatre is not to entertain but rather "to surprise the audience into a fresh and critical appreciation of the causes and processes underlying what is

⁸² Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) major plays are *The Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (B. Brecht, *The Collected Plays* - 7 vols., ed. John Willet and Ralph Manheim, London: Eyre Methuen, 1976). Major studies on Brecht include: Martin Esslin, *Brecht: a Choice of Evils* (London: Methuen, 1959); Jan Needle and Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981); John Willet, *Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1984); and, Pia Kleber and Colin Visser (eds) *Reinterpreting Brecht: His Influence on Contemporary Drama and Film* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1990).

⁸³ A.R. Braunmueller writes: "One of the dirtiest words in Brecht's lexicon is *kulinarish* (culinary), typically applied to a work of art. The artist as cook, the art-work as food, the audience as consumer: in their relation, nothing but unthinking pleasure and the satisfaction of a manufactured need by unreal means." See introduction to *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagony* by B. Brecht; trans. W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1976) 13.

enacted.”⁸⁴ According to Brecht, “The aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident [portrayed on the stage].”⁸⁵ There must not be any attempt to transform the atmosphere or the stage and the auditorium into a different time and place. In other words, no attempt must be made to put the audience “into a trance and give it the illusion of watching an ordinary unrehearsed event.”⁸⁶ The actor must address the audience directly without any illusion of a ‘fourth wall.’ He must not think of winning the ‘empathy’ of the audience.

Brecht has been described as an “existential rebel” and as a “social revolutionary.”⁸⁷ He was also a Marxist.⁸⁸ Brecht’s plays made great demands upon the audience. He saw the spectator not as a passive recipient but as an active and integral component of his plays. He believed that bourgeois audiences could never profit from his plays but only workers and peasants; they are interested in changing the society because they are the victims of social exploitation. Brecht said,

It is in the interests of the people, the broad working masses, that literature should give them truthful representations of life; and truthful representations of life are in fact only of use to the broad working masses, the people; so they have to be suggestive and intelligible to them, i.e. popular.⁸⁹

The economic, social and political situation in which he lived cast its dismal shadow across Brecht’s works. He witnessed two world wars, the collapse of empires in Austria, Germany, Hungary, and in Russia in the revolutions of 1917-18. Communist and Fascist movements merged throughout continental Europe. He saw the ravage and misery brought about by the Third Reich. Brecht himself was an exile. As a result, his works project a low opinion of human

⁸⁴ Arrigo Subiotto, ‘Epic Theatre: A Theatre for the Scientific Age,’ in *Brecht in Perspective*, ed. Graham Bartram and Anthony Wayne (London: Longman, 1982) 30.

⁸⁵ B. Brecht, “Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect” (1940), in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, edited and translated by John Willet, (London: Methuen, 1957; reprint, 1996) 136.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt* (Boston: Little Brown and Co.) 232.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 250. Brecht admitted in 1955 that “actors and audiences needed to share the Marxist politics of the dramatists for the epic theatre to make sense.” Subiotto, *op. cit.*, 43.

⁸⁹ B. Brecht, “The Popular and the Realistic,” (1938), in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, 107

nature. He could not convince himself that the human being was capable of any noble action. This explains the caricature of humanity that one finds in Brecht's works. Brustein states:

Negative and ironic, scrupulously anti-heroic, anti-individualist, Brecht shares with (the German Neo-romantic) movement a determinedly low opinion of human nature, fastening on the criminal or abnormal side of life, and charting these subterranean avenues in searing, distended images.⁹⁰

Brecht's rebellion against cruelty, greed, and lust was two-edged; on the one hand, he attributed an external cause to those from a communist standpoint, describing the human aggressive instincts as an outgrowth of the capitalist system; on the other hand, Brecht put the blame on the chaos in the human soul; this latter is a surprising subjective note that frequently surfaces in his works.⁹¹

Brecht labelled his style of theatre as "epic theatre." This is the type of theatre that "seeks through careful choice of theme and formal structural means, to inculcate in the audience the detached distancing attitude of the historian towards the events portrayed."⁹² In his notes to the opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany* (1930), Brecht outlined the basic contradictions (or, "shifts of accent") between the dramatic theatre of Aristotle and his own epic theatre. In the Aristotelian theatre the conflict of free wills represented by personalities impels dramatic action. There is serenity and repose when the conflict is resolved at the end of the play. Each character is fixed and behaves consistently in terms of his or her set qualities, which are derived from the character's inner life and thought. "Empathy" (or identification) is an emotional relationship that is established between the character and the spectator. Empathy in effect is a delegation of power on the part of the spectator who become an object in relation to the character; whatever happens to the latter, happens to the spectator."⁹³

In the epic theatre of Brecht, on the contrary, the character does not have set qualities. His or her actions are dictated by his social environment and social process, and therefore, are subject to change. The dramatic conflict is not between individuals but between economic, social and political forces. In the epic theatre, the spectator is never allowed to lose touch with reality.

⁹⁰ Brustein, *op. cit.*, 233.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁹² Subiotto, *op. cit.*, 30.

⁹³ Boal, *op. cit.*, 102.

Though he or she is an observer, his or her critical consciousness is aroused. The end of the play does not resolve the conflict. On the contrary, the spectator becomes conscious of the plight of the society.⁹⁴

Brecht compares the dramatic theatre and the epic theatre in the following manner:

The dramatic theatre's spectator says: Yes, I have felt like that too – Just like me – It's only natural – It'll never change – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are inescapable – That's great art; it all seems the most obvious thing in the world – I weep when they weep, I laugh when they laugh.

The epic theatre's spectator says: I'd never have thought it – That's not the way – That's extraordinary, hardly believable – It's got to stop – The sufferings of this man appal me, because they are unnecessary – That's great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh.”⁹⁵

Brecht leads the spectator into objective evaluation and reflection by means of the dramatic technique he terms “alienation effect” (*Verfremdungseffekt*).⁹⁶ According to him, “the aim of this technique known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident.”⁹⁷ The purpose was to enable the spectator to criticise the story constructively and objectively, evaluating incidents in their wider context. Brecht's effort was then to transform the theatre from a performance area, which had hitherto lulled the spectator into passivity and lethargy, into an arena for instruction and action. He tried to achieve this by a strange combination of artistic and didactic components. “Alienation” must characterise the acting style, in which the actor distances himself or herself from the character he or she is playing. Brecht said, “The actor does not allow himself to become totally transformed on stage into the character he is portraying.”⁹⁸ He or she is just showing a character to the audience. Otherwise the actor must do everything to alienate himself or herself from the character the actor represents on the stage.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ B. Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre,” (1927) in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, 71. Instead of ‘epic theatre’ Brecht later named his theatre ‘theatre of a scientific age’ and still later on, ‘dialectical theatre’ but his concept of theatre stayed the same. See “‘Dialectics in Theatre’: an editorial note,” *ibid.*, 276, 281-282.

⁹⁶ First described in his essay, ‘Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting,’ 1935. See Subiotto, *op. cit.*, 36.

⁹⁷ Bertolt Brecht, “Short -description of a New Technique of Acting Which Produces an Alienation Effect,” in *The Uses of Drama*, ed. John Hodgson (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972) 114.

His dramatic genius is reflected in many subsequent theatre movements including the Theatre of the Absurd⁹⁹ and the People's Theatre. According to his critics,

... Brecht was undoubtedly the greatest theatrical *story-teller*, of this century.... By removing many of the artificial elements of theatre story-telling and replacing them with a starkly told series of events, he increased the reality, tension and emotional effect. He also, in many cases, increased the "magic" of the theatre story, while trying, if we are to believe some of his writings, to decrease or eliminate it. But while the bones of his dramaturgy can be isolated, the mix, and the magic, cannot.¹⁰⁰

The influence of Brecht has been generally acknowledged by practitioners of popular theatre in various countries. Augusto Boal in Peru,¹⁰¹ PETA,¹⁰² Carlos Gaspar, and others in the Philippines,¹⁰³ Utpal Dutt¹⁰⁴ in India, and Ross Kidd¹⁰⁵ in Africa, among others, have adopted the style of the epic theatre for designing a powerful and socially provocative dramatic technique for People's Theatre.

Popular theatre for liberation owes much of its art and its methodology to the literary genius of Bertolt Brecht. First of all, the idea of the 'instructive theatre' goes back to Brecht who insisted that the primary mission of the theatre is to be instructive rather than to be entertaining, to provoke rather than to soothe and console. The great task of the theatre is to promote the transformation of the society and the liberation of the exploited.¹⁰⁶ To make the theatre instructive, Brecht introduced the method of 'alienation' both in the acting style and in the total dramatic performance. Later this approach influenced the style of the People's Theatre. Secondly, the People's Theatre has been influenced by Brecht's concept of the spectator as a central figure in the theatre process; according to Brecht, the spectator has a key role, as he is the

⁹⁸ B. Brecht, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect" (1940), in *Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic*, 137.

⁹⁹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) 410-13.

¹⁰⁰ Jan Needle and Peter Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981) 213-214.

¹⁰¹ Judith A. Weiss, et al., discusses the influence of Brecht on the Latin American popular theatre. See *Latin American Popular Theatre*, 151-52.

¹⁰² *PETA and Brecht* (Manila: PETA-DRP, 1982).

¹⁰³ Carlos Gaspar et al., *Creative Dramatics: Trainer's Manual* (Hongkong: Plough Publications, 1981).

¹⁰⁴ A.J. Gunavardhana, 'Theatre as a Weapon -- Interview,' *The Drama Review* 15 (1971) 231.

¹⁰⁵ 'People's Theatre, Conscientization and Struggle,' *Media Development* 27 (July 1980) 10-14. See also A. Tatlow and T. Wong, *Brecht and East Asian Theatre* (Hongkong: Hongkong University Press, 1982).

¹⁰⁶ Brecht said, "Like the transformation of nature, that of the society is a liberating act; and it is the joy of liberation which the theatre of a scientific age has got to convey." See "A Short Organum for the Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 139.

person who will take up the challenge to change the world. He believed that only workers and peasants would benefit from his plays, as they were the ones who were looking for social change. Thus Brecht showed the need to take the theatre to common people. Thirdly, the People's Theatre has derived its understanding of the theatre as a powerful tool of social change from Brecht. Brecht unravelled the political implications of the theatre and its potential to challenge the unjust socio-political machinery through his theatre. According to Needle and Thomson, "Brecht's hope for mankind, and the political 'message' he wanted his audience to draw from his plays, was that the human nature could, would and must change."¹⁰⁷ These concepts are basic to the methodology of the People's Theatre. People's Theatre's perceptions of the didactic potentials of the theatre, the central role of the spectator, and the potentials of the theatre as a tool of social change make it an important resource for liturgical renewal.

3.4.4.2. Paulo Freire (1921-1997)

While the People's Theatre owes its the dramatic framework to Brecht, its educational philosophy is largely derived from the theories of the Brazilian educator and author Paulo Freire.¹⁰⁸ The organisational pattern of People's Theatre follows the guidelines set forth by Freire. The following paragraphs outline briefly Freire's theory of pedagogy; the concluding section shows how this theory finds its application in the People's Theatre.

¹⁰⁷ Needle and Thomson, *Brecht*, 198.

¹⁰⁸ For example, the work of Augusto Boal, one of the great proponents of the People's Theatre, reveals the influence of Freire. Jan Cohen-Cruz says, "While Boal never actually collaborated with Freire, they both worked at a Popular Centre for Culture in the north of Brazil in 1960. Boal paid homage to Freire in naming his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Like Freire, Boal's focus has been to actively engage people suffering oppression in their own liberation process." See *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, ed. Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz (London: Routledge, 1994) 113.

Paulo Freire's major works include *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra B. Ramos, (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), *Pedagogy in Process: Letters from Guinea-Buissau* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977) and (with Antonio Faundez), *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*, trans. Tony Coates (Geneva: WCC, 1989). See Denis Collins, *Paulo Freire: His Life and Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

Freire quotes Lenin who said, "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."¹⁰⁹ Freire sets down a revolutionary theory of education that is designed to develop awareness in the minds of oppressed people and to engage them in a reflection-action praxis, which is geared towards social transformation. Freire evolved his educational theory from actual experiences in the field of adult education in Brazil and Chile. His basic assumption is that "man's ontological vocation ... is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms the world, and in so doing moves towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively."¹¹⁰ But where economic, social and political domination persists, the human being is relegated to a state of passivity where he or she drifts in a state of despair and resignation. He or she then lives in a "culture of silence" treating the "world" as a closed reality, a destiny to be accepted as unchangeable.

Education, which is truly liberating is the way out of this quagmire of despair and lethargy. Freire calls such education "conscientisation" (Portuguese: *conscientizacao*) which is a process of learning which enables people "to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."¹¹¹ The educators are radicals who have committed themselves to the people's cause and are willing to share their plight and to engage with them in the struggle for their liberation. Their primary task is to encourage the oppressed to take responsibility for their struggle, for, according to Freire, only the oppressed can free themselves.

Liberating education is in direct contrast to the "banking concept of education," according to which "education is an act of depositing."¹¹² The teacher acts as the custodian of knowledge and treats the students as empty vessels or repositories to be filled with information. Such an approach rules out a spirit of inquiry and stifles creative imagination. Freire said, "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness."¹¹³ Instead both the teacher and the students have to become learners; "both have

¹⁰⁹ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 119-20.

¹¹⁰ Richard Schaul, Forward to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 12-13.

¹¹¹ Translator's footnote, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 19.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

to be cognitive subjects, in spite of being different.”¹¹⁴ Freire affirmed that “apart from inquiry ... man cannot be truly human.”¹¹⁵ Oppressive societies promote banking education in order to domesticate and exploit people.

Liberating education, on the other hand, is “the practice of freedom.” It aims at developing critical consciousness in the student. It “consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information.”¹¹⁶ It is the practice of problem-posing, that is, posing of problems of persons on their relation with the world. Its methodology is dialogue between the teacher and the student. In fact, in the process of dialogue, the teacher-student dichotomy is resolved. Both engage in the process of learning and grow together. The end of the problem-posing education is to help people to perceive reality (that is, the present, existential, concrete situation in which they live) critically. As a result, they begin to see the world not as a closed reality but as one, which is in the process of transformation. They realise that only working human hands have the power to bring about transformation.¹¹⁷

Freire defines liberating education as praxis, which is dialogue with the world. This refers to the rhythm of action and reflection.¹¹⁸ It is the opposite of passivity and silence. “To speak a true word,” Freire says, “is to transform the world.”¹¹⁹ This involves community with others. Dialogue is central to Freire’s educational philosophy. He asserts that “without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there is no education.”¹²⁰ Freire attributes moral qualities to dialogue. It is characterised by the qualities of love, which is basically commitment to the world and to people, of humility expressed in one’s willingness to learn from others, of faith in man and his creativity and hope. Together with critical thinking, which generates further critical thinking, dialogue becomes a powerful medium of learning.

¹¹⁴ Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987) 33.

¹¹⁵ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 57.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

Friere defines liberating education as political action since it affects the power structures of the society. His scheme of implementing the educational theory involves the direct and crucial participation of the oppressed. The stages in the practice of liberating education are the following:¹²¹

Stage One

The first stage consists of three activities:

- a. Investigators (who are outsiders) visit the community and engage in the collection of data on the life of the community with the purpose of identifying “generative themes.” In this process they have the co-operation and positive involvement of the local people as co-investigators. They observe closely the activities, the life-style, demeanour and social interactions of the people in different situations in the life of the community. They look at the community as one “living code” to be deciphered.
- b. After each visit of observation, the investigators draw up a brief report to be discussed with other investigators and the local co-investigators.
- c. These reports are evaluated and original perceptions are reconsidered in dialogue with the local participants in local gatherings of the community. Thus the principal and secondary ‘contradictions’ in the society (the ‘thematic nuclei’) are identified.

Stage Two

There are two activities involved here:

- a. The investigators select some of the contradictions touching the different aspects of the community and develop primary “codifications.” The contradictions are codified in the form of sketches, photographs, etc. Together they must give a comprehensive picture of the total aspects of the life-situation of the community.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 75-118.

- b. These codifications are decodified and discussed thoroughly in the local gatherings in order to deepen the awareness of the people regarding their own situations.

Stage Three

This involves two processes:

- a. Decoding dialogue continues in thematic circles, each consisting of less than twenty people. Materials prepared in the previous stages are discussed again. These meetings result in the further clarification of themes.
- b. With the help of the experts, these themes are broken down and classified.

Stage Four

- a. The final codification leads to the preparation of teaching materials. The communication mode suited to each theme is chosen. Freire says, "Some themes or nuclei may be presented by means of brief dramatizations."¹²²
- b. The teaching materials are presented to the community along with instructions for use. "The thematics which have come from the people return to them – not as contents to be deposited, but as problems to be solved."¹²³

This methodology is based on Freire's view that there is no "self-liberation" and that "liberation is a social act. Liberating education is a social process of illumination."¹²⁴ He believes that "dialogue with people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution. This is what makes it a revolution, as distinguished by a military *coup*."¹²⁵ According to him, "the revolution is made neither by leaders for the people nor by the people for the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakeable solidarity."¹²⁶

¹²² *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Freire and Shor, *Pedagogy for Liberation*, 109.

¹²⁵ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 98.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

The practitioners of People's Theatre have adopted the Freirian approach of problem-solving education by deriving themes from the life of the community and by codifying them in drama. Kidd refers to drama as a powerful means of codification "not only because the people are capable of creating the code themselves (and therefore are not dependent upon an externally imposed code) but also because it portrays conflict and therefore lends itself to a dialectical view of the world."¹²⁷

The major strength of problem-posing education is the emphasis on dialogue and the participation of the people. The curriculum of such educational practice derives from the real life of the people and the situations they confront. When they set their mind to solve their own problems through a process of dialogue, their critical awareness is sharpened and their ability to engage in social action is strengthened.

The aim of Freireian 'conscientisation' of the oppressed is to enable them to take their initiative in achieving their liberation. Conscientisation is the outcome of dialogue and personal participation of the learner in the learning process. Here the traditional teacher-student dichotomy is resolved as both the teacher and the student face realities together and assist each other in making sense of them. Freire's method of 'problem-posing education' throws overboard the ready-made answers by the so-called experts. Its aim is to identify, spell out and challenge oppressive structures with the active participation of the community.

The didactic method of People's Theatre is based on the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, which emphasises active learning in which the learner plays an active and significant role, as significant as that of the teacher. In the People's Theatre the play is a vehicle of dialogic and problem-posing education. It is based on the "generative themes" of the community. The spectator as the learner has an active role in turning the play into a means of the problem-solving, liberating exercise. This approach has revolutionised the art of the theatre.

3.4.4.3. *Augusto Boal*

¹²⁷ Ross Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientization and Struggle," *Media Development* 27 (July 1980): 13.

Augusto Boal is a Peruvian dramatist who has been influenced by the works of Brecht and Freire. He is a theoretician, politician, and theatre genius who has greatly enriched the repertoire of People theatre by translating Brechtian concepts and Freireian theories into sound theatre practice. His trail-blazing theatre experiments have evoked universal response from People's Theatre groups around the world.¹²⁸ His original theatre experiments in the cities of Lima and Chiclayo, related to a programme of Integral Literacy Operation (ALFIN), drew a lot of attention from popular theatre practitioners abroad. He has conducted theatre workshops all over the world, including India. Boal has named his style of dramaturgy *Teatro del oprimado* ("Theatre of the Oppressed"). His major work carrying the same title has been translated into twenty-five languages.

Boal believes that the Theatre of the Oppressed is much more progressive than the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht. It is true that, compared to the passive spectator of the Aristotelian theatre, the spectator of Brecht's epic theatre is active and he or she refuses to delegate power to the character on the stage to *think* for him or her. At the same time, Brecht's spectator does not *act*; instead, he or she delegates that responsibility to the character on the stage. But, in the case of the poetics of the oppressed, "the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or think in his place; on the contrary he himself assumes the protagonist role...."¹²⁹

Boal points out that the theatre originally belonged to the people.¹³⁰ But in the course of history the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built dividing walls. They turned it into a performance and separated the actors from the people, and the protagonists from the chorus.¹³¹ Now the people have claimed back the theatre and now they are making it their own.

Boal believes that the "theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it."¹³² As a weapon it could be used "for domination or liberation."¹³³ He is convinced that theatre is "the

¹²⁸ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. C. A. and M.O.L. McBride (London: Pluto Press, 1979). His other work translated into English are: *The Rainbow of Desire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) and *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, trans. Adrian Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹²⁹ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 122.

¹³⁰ Boal says, "In the beginning the theatre was as dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival, the feast." *Ibid.*, 119.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, ix.

most perfect form of coercion”¹³⁴ with wide-ranging political implications. According to Boal, “All theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them. The theatre is a weapon, a very efficient weapon.”¹³⁵

a. The theatre of Boal:

In the Theatre of the Oppressed, as Boal envisages it, there is no separation between the actor and the spectator. People are transformed from their status as passive spectators “into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action.”¹³⁶ Boal hopes that by participating in this theatre the spectator will imbibe “a desire to practice in reality the act he has rehearsed in the theatre.”¹³⁷ He hopes that, as a result, the oppressed would equip themselves with a new awareness and strength to be able to engage in social action. Boal says,

In order to understand the poetics of the oppressed one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people – “spectator”, passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action.... The liberated spectator, as a whole person, launches into action. No matter that the action is fictional; what matters is that it is action!¹³⁸

The Theatre of the Oppressed is an effort to enable the spectators to look objectively and with understanding on the oppressive structures in the society and to enact possible solutions to counter such oppression. The Theatre of the Oppressed is therefore a “rehearsal for the revolution.”¹³⁹

One finds in Boal’s theatre an emphasis on exercises for the mind and the body, enabling the participants to discover the limitations and potentials of both. About the role of the body in Boal’s theatre, Philip Auslander says,

Augusto Boals’s theatre is intensely physical in nature: everything begins with the image, and the image is made up of human bodies. Boal’s theatre takes the body of the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

spect-actor as its chief means of expression. The body also becomes the primary locus of the ideological inscriptions and oppressions.¹⁴⁰

But Boal's theatre is more than a physical theatre. The raw material for his theatre is both the imagination and the physical qualities of the participants. In fact, his theatre is basically an expression of the victory of the mind over the body, the triumph of the human spirit over the debilitating circumstances of oppression. The imaginative mind dares to dream of freedom and victory and to rehearse liberation even before it becomes a reality.

The three major types of the Theatre of the Oppressed are the Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, and Invisible Theatre. In 1968 in Brazil, Boal designed his Forum Theatre that is indeed a rehearsal for social change. In a Forum Theatre session, a small group presents a dramatised and pre-rehearsed story of oppression or injustice; it is an open-ended play. This is done under the guidance of the "Joker" who acts as the facilitator. This problematic enactment or the "antimodel," is staged before an audience who are not just an audience but "spect-actors" combining the roles of the spectator and the actor in themselves. The victim of the oppression plays the role of the protagonist in the "anti-model." The "Joker" now asks the "spect-actors" to propose solutions to the enacted problem situation – not to describe them in so many words but rather to show them in action, by taking the place of the protagonist as the enactment is repeated. Anyone who has a suggestion to change the situation may shout, "Stop!", enter the stage and play out an alternative tactic to overcome the oppression. If it is unsatisfactory, another person may interrupt the action to present a better idea to tackle the oppression. In one Forum there will be several interruptions until a satisfactory solution is reached and the oppressors are defeated.¹⁴¹

Boal developed the Image Theatre in Peru in 1973.¹⁴² The image theatre is an exercise in problem solving, in which one group of 'spect-actors' gives shape to an "image" or a scene of a particular oppressive situation by means of an arrangement of human bodies. It takes the form of a tableau. If the improvised image does not depict the oppressive situation satisfactorily, the rest of the spect-actors may suggest changes. These changes are made one after another until a satisfactory image of the real situation, or *Real Image*, is arrived at. The next stage is to give shape to an *Ideal Image*, which reflects the removal of the oppressive conditions. They may also

¹⁴⁰ Philip Auslander, "Boal, Blau, Brecht: The Body," in *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, 124.

¹⁴¹ Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, xxi, 17-21. See also, *Playing Boal*, 236-237.

¹⁴² *Games*, xix, 2-3.

show how the transition from the *Real Image* to the *Ideal Image* could be achieved. At each of these stages, the first presentation is followed by suggestions and changes until a picture that represents the views of the majority of the spect-actors is arrived at.

It was in Argentina, that Boal devised his Invisible Theatre.¹⁴³ Invisible Theatre involves the performance of a previously rehearsed play on a theme of pressing relevance in a public place among an audience who is not aware that it is a play. Actors pretending to be real characters draw members of the public into the action of the play. The play may involve serious discussions on the theme. The purpose of the exercise is to create a situation close to real-life and to make use of it to conscientise the general public of social injustices and situations of oppression. It also helps the public to realise their own role in such situations.

Boal has his critics too. For example, Steve Ball criticises some of Boal's methods from Theatre-in-Education situation in Britain.¹⁴⁴ He finds that they do not fit easily into the British environment where the oppressions are "subtle" in comparison the physically oppressive situations in the Third World. Therefore the British practitioners of the Theatre of the Oppressed feel compelled to adapt the methodology drastically even to the point of defeating its original intentions. Further, Ball feels that it is too ambitious to combine the dramatic element and the pedagogy in the Forum Theatre since both suffer in practice. According to Ball, not many of a normal audience possess the self-confidence to take up the role of "spect-actors;" he suspects that the few who venture to do so are just showing off. His most damaging view is that such participation in the theatre can never lead to social change or liberation other than to explore issues related to personal and social education.

Ball's criticisms have their origin in a particular socio-political situation in which, as he puts it, the oppression is "subtle." Such situation calls for even subtler theatre practice! Ball seems to underestimate the capacities of the actors as well as those of the audiences. The view that participation in pedagogical theatre is ineffective seems to be rather unfair in view of the fact that such theatre is equipping the oppressed all over the world with awareness and self-confidence.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, xx, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Steve Ball, "The Influence of Boal on Theatre in Education in Britain," in "Working Without Boal," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 3/1 (1995): 83-84.

b. Augusto Boal and People's Theatre:

The direct influence of Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed on the People's Theatre around the world is generally acknowledged.¹⁴⁵ Boal himself has personally encouraged and trained practitioners of People's Theatre in several countries. Living in Rio de Janeiro, today he continues to be involved in the work of the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO).¹⁴⁶ The main features of Boal's dramaturgy that are of relevance to the People's Theatre are the following:

Firstly, Boal's theatre is an interactive theatre that functions through dialogue and constant interaction between the audience and the stage. He believes that every spectator is capable of such dialogue and creative interaction that would make him or her a 'spect-actor.' This is a learning process. For Boal, dialogue is a means of conscientisation and of liberation whereas monologue is a sign of oppression and domination.

Secondly, Boal rests his faith on the power of the oppressed to change their own plight. He seeks to equip them for their task with the tools of dramaturgy which he believes will enable them to analyse situations of social injustice and to counter them first at the imaginative level and later at the level of practical action. Boal's theatre is intended for the person at the grassroots level. In the role of a 'spect-actor' one must contribute to one's own liberation. Theatre is a 'rehearsal for revolution.'

Thirdly, he emphasises the need to strengthen the spect-actor's capabilities for self-awareness and assessment of his or her physical, emotional and imaginative qualities. For, those are his or her weapons to fight oppression and exploitation.

Fourthly, Boal emphasises the group process, which is the strength of the theatre. The oppressed are enabled to join hands to resist the structures that militate against their liberation.

¹⁴⁵ See for example, Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 26-28.

¹⁴⁶ In Rio de Janeiro, Boal's present preoccupation is to use the theatre to carry the views of the general public to the local administration and to influence the administration to act in deference to them. See Richard Schechner and Sudipto Chatterjee, "Augusto Boal, City Councillor: Legislative Theatre and the Chamber in the Streets," in *The Drama Review* 42 (Winter 98): 75-90.

Boal's dramaturgy is used not only in the countries in the South, but also in the affluent countries by popular theatre groups and others to organise themselves against situations of injustice, social discrimination, exploitation, and oppression.¹⁴⁷

The People's Theatre and the Theatre of the Oppressed of Augusto Boal owe much to the pedagogical theory of Paulo Freire. Freire and Boal have worked together. It is believed that Boal has been influenced by Freire's theory of education.¹⁴⁸ There are things common to their schemes for social education and change. Firstly, both address the issue of pedagogy. Both aim to 'conscientise' the oppressed and to enable them to take their own enlightened initiatives to achieve liberation. This is the transformation that both aim to achieve. Secondly, both adopt a dialogical and participatory approach to learning in which the traditional teacher-student dichotomy is resolved. Both are teachers and both are learners and they face the challenge to learn and grow together. In the case of theatre, not just the actor, but the spectator also is expected to play an equally significant role; therefore Boal calls the spectator 'spect-actor' who participates in giving shape to the finished form of the theatre. Thirdly, both propose similar types of 'problem-posing education' which rejects the ready-made answers by so-called experts. Freire has shown how a team of animateurs may, in dialogue with the people, develop 'generative themes' and their 'codifications' to identify and challenge oppressive structures with the active participation of the people. Similarly in Boal's theatre, drama develops from a scenario, which originates from the pressing problems and issues of the people. Theatre gives shape to the people's perception of those issues and their solutions.

The three thinkers, whose major contributions were summarised above, have influenced the new People's Theatre considerably. Brecht was a dramatist, Freire an educator, and Boal a dramatist-cum-educator. All three have a common thrust: the education of the oppressed for their liberation. All of them are Marxist fellow-travellers and Otty ascribes the concurrence of their theories to their common political perspective. He says,

¹⁴⁷ See for example, specific case studies of such use in *Playing Boal*, 35-83. See also a set of articles on "Working Without Boal: Digressions and Developments in the Theatre of the Oppressed," (ed.) Franc Chamberlain, *Contemporary Theatre Review* 3/1 (1995).

While there is no reason to conclude that Boal (and still less Freire) took their ideas directly from Brecht I do not think it is surprising, on reflection, that these links should exist. What has happened, in my view, is that these three have found themselves moving in similar directions as a result of applying the methods of dialectical materialism to the problems of communication in the normally discrete fields (according to bourgeois descriptions) of theatre and education.¹⁴⁹

The People's Theatre in the Third World continues to adapt and contextualise the thinking of these pioneers to its great advantage. These three thinkers share the point of view that the liberation of the oppressed is possible only when the oppressed themselves become aware of the reality of their plight, the identity of their oppressors, the reasons for their oppression, and their own strength as individuals and as a class to overthrow their oppressors. The epic theatre of Brecht, and the liberating education of Freire, and the Theatre of the Oppressed are all intended to generate such awareness, assertiveness, and a sense of solidarity among the oppressed. Their ideas are profitable for the present research to develop a viable strategy for critically evaluating, identifying and employing the fundamental principles, methodology and resources of the People's Theatre in the process of liturgical renewal. In the next section the theory and practice of the People's Theatre is evaluated from a Christian point of view.

3.5. A Critique of the Theory and Practice of the People's Theatre

The People's Theatre has its strengths and weaknesses. The following is a general assessment of People's Theatre, especially of its versions styled on Boal's dramaturgy. General points of strength and weakness are summarised below, which are followed by a few theological reservations about the theory and practice of the People's Theatre.

3.5.1. Strengths of the People's Theatre

- a. As the phrase suggests, People's Theatre belongs to the people. It is a theatre of the people, by the people, for the people. It is a culturally appropriate medium that can be adapted easily to local conditions. It does not demand literacy or high technical skills or physical

¹⁴⁸ For example, Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz says that Boal was "influenced by Paulo Freire's philosophy of education." See "Introduction" to *Playing Boal*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Nick Otty, "Theatre of the Oppressed: Cultural Action for Freedom – Boal, Freire, and the 'Major Pedagogy' of Brecht in the Context of Higher Education," in "Working Without Boal," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 3/1 (1995) 92.

endowments on the part of the participants. Everyone, men and women, young and old, educated and illiterate, can take part in People's Theatre. Therefore it has great uses in the church's worship and mission.

- b. People's Theatre is affordable and manageable even for the poorest communities; it is 'pure theatre which can stand its own ground without elaborate make-up, costumes, lighting, sound, or stage facilities. This enables its wider use in several contexts. For example, it can be used profitably in the context of public worship without the trivialities distracting anyone's attention.
- c. It is an educational theatre primarily intended to conscientise people. It enables better comprehension of abstract ideas and complex issues of life. It challenges and provokes viewers and participants alike to involve themselves and to take immediate action.
- d. People's Theatre is entertaining; the judicious use of humour quells resistance to new ideas and promotes easy comprehension.
- e. It emphasises the actor-spectator relationship. People's Theatre brings the spectator to the centre stage. The original dialectics between the characters on stage is broadened to include the audience in the theatre process. In the context of worship, it engenders the involvement of the whole congregation thus contributing positively to the dynamics of the liturgical action.
- f. People's Theatre is a weapon for fighting evil and injustice. It equips ordinary men and women to critically analyse social structures and to develop viable strategies to pool their strength and to counter forces of evil. In the context of Christian worship and mission People's Theatre has many applications in dealing with oppressive and dehumanising situations in the church and the society.
- g. People's Theatre is the voice of the voiceless. It is a form of micromedia for communication at the grassroots level. It is a relevant means of people's resistance to the cultural hegemony perpetrated by the mass media.

- h. People's Theatre can play a vial role in promoting the growth of the cultural development of communities by making use of local artistes, local resources, traditional arts, folklore and folk music. Along these lines it can go a long way in enriching the social and cultural life of local congregations and their meaningful association with people of other faiths.

3.5.2. Weaknesses:

- a. Some of the criticisms that have been levelled against People's Theatre groups are the following: their performances have poor theatrical quality; their theatre lacks ideological commitment and sincerity; the follow-up is poor.¹⁵⁰ But it would be rather cruel to generalise these criticisms.
- b. Often the social animateurs and educators who organise People's Theatre have their own axes to grind; they have an agenda of their own and are slavishly committed to particular ideologies. It will be counter-productive if they use the theatre to serve their own interests, and in the process, trample on the needs, problems, and aspirations of the people.
- c. The organisers of the People's Theatre sometimes fail to take into consideration the indigenous communications system of the community (i.e. the natural communication flow in the community as well as the traditional communications and the arts). Instead of adapting and dovetailing their own methodologies into the existing communication system, they try to foist their means and methods on the community. As a result, their messages remain foreign and meet with rejection. The social and cultural distance between the animateurs and the local community makes dialogue and mutual appreciation difficult. It will be dangerous indeed should the People's Theatre fall into the hands of vested interests and become yet another means of cultural hegemony and of political and religious indoctrination set on capturing the minds of unsuspecting communities.

3.5.3. Some theological reservations

People's Theatre has great potentials as an instrument of social transformation. But is it an appropriate means of liturgical renewal? Is it congruent with Christian faith and practice?

¹⁵⁰ Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 210-225.

These questions need to be answered. But People's Theatre is a secular vehicle of social communication. It will be rather unkind to assess a secular methodology with the yardstick of Christian faith and practice. But it is not possible to shun such an assessment in the present enterprise. The following are some basic questions that must be tackled in a general approach to the People's Theatre:

3.5.3.1. The Concept of human nature in People's Theatre: Are humans 'sinners' or 'saints'?

The proponents of People's Theatre often seem to rely on vague, generalised, or stereotyped concepts of human nature. For example, it is presumed that everyone belonging to a particular social class has the same attitudes and behaviour. Individual differences are discounted and stereotyped characterisation of "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat" are made; theories of social change are built upon such precarious premises. This point is exemplified in the writings of Augusto Boal ("the oppressed," "the oppressors," etc.) and falls in line with the concepts of the Paulo Freire and the liberation theologians (Gustavo Gutierrez: "the poor"), all working within the Marxist paradigm of social organisation.

There is a distorted concept of human nature that underlies the philosophy of some forms of People's Theatre. It is assumed that since the People's Theatre is the "theatre of the oppressed," it has the license to take up arms against the "oppressors," who are class enemies! But the total delegation of the bad plight of the world on the so-called "oppressors" and the equally blithe exculpation of the "oppressed" of all responsibility seem to be sheer exaggeration and distortion of the truth. This scheme operates under the simplistic view that human nature is uncomplicated and fairly predictable and therefore social change can be easily planned and engineered -- hence the black and white characters and naïve solutions to social problems in many a People's Theatre presentation.¹⁵¹

In the Bible, however, both the oppressor and the oppressed, both being human, are equally responsible for their plight and stand in equal need of God's grace, mercy and salvation (Lk. 19: 10; Rom. 3: 9-20). Jesus does not hesitate to qualify the poor as "sinners," the label used by his critics on them (cf. Mk. 1: 19, pars.). He does not condone their sin, but forgives them and

¹⁵¹ Referring to badly made street plays, Srampickal says, "Characters are mostly black and white. Politicians, landlords, police and industrialists are always shown as wrongdoers, who get away with anything, whereas the poor always suffer." See *ibid.*, 214.

warns them that they should “sin no more” (e.g. Jn. 5:14; 8:11). He takes pity on them for they were more *sinned-against* ones rather than “sinners” (cf. Mt. 9: 36) and focuses his ministry on their emancipation (Lk. 4: 18-20; 7: 22-23). This is a realistic approach to human predicament, which does not close the eyes to the ‘tragic flaw’ in human nature.

From a Christian standpoint, People's Theatre's view of the human predicament is guilty of naivety in terms of its stereotyped notions of social groups and unrealistic approach to human character.

3.5.3.2. *Faith in what?*

The People's Theatre sets much store by the human ability to find solutions to all human problems. There is place for “faith” in people's theatre, but that happens to be faith in human nature. In this, People's Theatre follows Paulo Freire who says, “Dialogue further requires an intense faith in man, faith in his power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in his vocation to be more human...”¹⁵² The human being-in-community is portrayed as the ultimate harbinger of hope. This philosophy operates under a materialistic and humanistic assumption that the human being is alone in his or her struggle against oppression and injustice. In the scheme of many a People's Theatre, there is no God, no grace, no redemption. The human being is thrown back on his or her resources to solve human problems and the problems of the world. The Christian, on the contrary, believes that the human being is never alone. God is on the side of the poor (cf. Lk. 1: 46-55). It is he who gives them power to overthrow the yoke of injustice (cf. 43; 1-7; Amos 5: 6-7; Zech. 4: 7; Rev. 1:18, 21: 5).

There is another question: is the *summum bonum* of social transformation confined to material well being? Does prosperity fulfil the purpose of human life? No, says the Bible. Jesus declared that “one does not live by bread alone” (Mt. 4: 4). The chief end of the human being is to live in communion with God (cf. Mic. 7:8). From a biblical perspective, any social theory, that fails to take into account the spiritual and eternal dimensions of human life, is truncated, misconstrued and myopic. Jesus meets the physical needs of human beings, but he points beyond them to their spiritual requirements which only God could satiate (Jn. 4: 13-14; 6: 26-35; cf. Mk. 2: 1-5).

¹⁵² *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

3.5.3.3. *Despair or hope?*

Hope in People's Theatre is based on human effort and naturally such hope could easily turn into despair on account of human limitations. It is little better than wishful thinking, having no guarantee of victory. This hard realisation casts a pall of gloom over the performances of the People's Theatre. Srampickal says, "The presentation of too many desperate situations can only help to emasculate revolutionary potential and strengthen fatalistic attitudes."¹⁵³ But Boal views the theatre of the oppressed as an expression of hope.¹⁵⁴

The Christian message is characterised by hope; it is not wishful thinking but an assurance of victory that is guaranteed by the victory of God in the resurrection of Christ from the dead (cf. Mt. 28: 18; Jn. 16: 41; Rev. 1: 17-18). Since Christ is risen, there is no scope for fear or despair in Christian experience. No barrier is too high, no chasm too wide, no grief too deep, no structure too inviolable for the Christian. Even death is not the last word in the fight against corruption and evil (cf. Rom. 8: 38-39; 1 Cor. 15: 55-57).

3.5.3.4. *Love or hatred?*

In the dialectic of revolutionary action, the revolutionary's love is often limited to the oppressed. Therefore, hate rules the practice of many a People's Theatre group and provides the fuel for theatrical action. The oppressors are hated as the class enemies against whom the oppressed must pit their strength. Therefore much energy is spent in many a People's Theatre workshop to foment animosities against the oppressors. Extreme examples are seen in political theatres.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Srampickal, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 221.

¹⁵⁴ Listen to Boal, as he writes in 1992:

Now, in 1992, when so many certainties have become so many doubts, when so many dreams have become as many deceptions – now that we are living through times and situations of great perplexity, full of doubts and uncertainties, now more than ever I believe it is time for a theatre which, at its best, will ask the right questions at the right times. Let us be democratic and ask our audiences to tell us their desires, and let us show them alternatives. Let us hope that one day – please, not too far in the future – we will be able to convince or force our governments, our leaders, to do the same.... Let us hope. Let us work at it!" (See Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, 247).

¹⁵⁵ Referring to the mission of the political theatre in West Bengal, India, Utpal Dutt once said, "Revolutionary theatre must preach revolution; it must not only expose the system but also call for the violent smashing of the state machine." See A.J. Gunavardhana, "Theatre as Weapon – Interview," *The Drama Review* 15 (Spring 1971): 225.

But if People's Theatre aims at liberation, it has to be ruled by positive feelings. The struggle for liberation should be motivated by love. Freire emphasises the significance of love, which he defines as "commitment to other men [people]."¹⁵⁶ Che Guevarra said, "Let me say with the risk of appearing ridiculous that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality."¹⁵⁷

According to the Bible, hatred could never be an instrument of social transformation. Jesus' command to his disciples was to practise sacrificial love (Jn. 13: 34-35; 15: 12-14). The Christian is challenged to extend his or her love so that it may transcend the boundaries of class and group distinctions and reach even the enemies (Mt. 5: 43-45; Lk. 23: 34; Rom. 12: 19). People's Theatre in a Christian context may be used only to engender love and never hatred.

But one must concede that the above theological objections to the People's Theatre are basically reflections on the perspectives of its secular practitioners. People's Theatre in Christian use can have an entirely different profile. It is with that understanding that one goes on to enlist the beneficial resources for liturgical renewal that are available in the People's Theatre.

3.6. Resources from the People's Theatre for liturgical renewal

The purpose of this section is to delineate the major elements of the People's Theatre, which are useful for bringing about liturgical renewal. These elements are arbitrarily chosen from among the many aspects and concerns of the People's Theatre.

3.6.1. Its participatory character

People's Theatre is a democratic form of art; it belongs to the people and is controlled by them. It is an illustration of people-centred and participatory communication, which may involve the whole community in its performance. Every member of the community is encouraged to play his or her part. Even the voice of the meekest becomes audible.

People's Theatre does not demand professional expertise from its participants. Its basic resources are the natural skills of the people and their native wisdom and humour; much depends on their willingness to listen, to share their ideas, to work with others, to entertain, and to take

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

risks. Communication skills are refined as the participants in the theatre process learn from one another and become confident of expressing their own ideas.

The concepts of Brecht and Boal underlie the emphasis on people's participation. Brecht insisted that the spectator had a vital role to play in the theatre process. It is the spectator who takes the message of the theatre to the world. Brecht's epic theatre was aimed at arousing the critical consciousness of the spectator. Boal went on further to give the spectator a more active and central role as a "spect-actor" who constantly interacts and engages in dialogue with the stage.¹⁵⁸ Called to play their part in the dramatic action, the spectators are immediately transformed from the status of being passive recipients to being active players.¹⁵⁹

In People's Theatre there is no spectator-performer dichotomy. This is primarily theatre for the self-instruction of the community. As a rule, it draws the spectator into the action; the audience becomes knowingly or unknowingly participants in the performance. Audience participation is one of the chief characteristics of People's Theatre.

3.6.2. Its theme: liberation

The aim and purpose of the People's Theatre is to bring liberation from oppression. It aims to influence the participants, both the performers and the spectators. Its aim to bring about transformation has its roots in the great dramatic traditions of the past and the present. Aristotle wanted to change people for the better through the theatre; he hoped that the exposure to the tragedy would purify them of negative emotions, by evoking in them 'pity and fear.'¹⁶⁰ But Boal is not in agreement with Aristotle's theory of catharsis. He sees in it a plot of the

¹⁵⁷ *Veceremos: The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevarra*, ed. J. Gerasi (New York: Orbis, 1969), cited by P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 78 f.n.

¹⁵⁸ Adrian Jackson, "Translator's Introduction" in Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, xxiv.

¹⁵⁹ *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, 122.

¹⁶⁰ Aristotle's definition of tragedy: "A tragedy is the imitation of an action (1) that is serious, has magnitude, and is complete in itself; (2) in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind introduced separately in different parts of the work; (3) in a dramatic as distinct from a narrative form; (4) with incidents arousing pity and fear, whereby to provide an outlet for such emotions." The words, "has magnitude," means that it has sufficient length as not to be considered 'trivial.' The words "language with pleasurable accessories" refer to 'rhythm' 'harmony' and 'song.' See *Aristotle's Poetics*, Demetrius on

establishment to domesticate the individual and to induce him or her to adjust to the existing conditions. He says that is not what the people need today; the theatre must rather “stimulate the spectator to transform his society, to engage on revolutionary action...”¹⁶¹ People’s Theatre is a theatre existing for social transformation.

Brecht’s intention was also to transform people by means of his epic theatre, which is basically an instructional theatre. Brecht said, “We need a theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”¹⁶²

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), “the suffering shaman of the modern theatre,” devised his Theatre of Cruelty with the specific aim of shocking people into change. He compared his theatre to a “plague.” He said,

If the essential theatre is like the plague, it is not because it is contagious, but because like the plague it is revelation, the bringing forth, the exteriorisation of a depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind, whether of an individual or of a people, are localised.¹⁶³

Artaud echoes Aristotelian theory of ‘catharsis.’ Commenting on Artaud’s theatre, Plunka says, “... The emphasis of Theatre of Cruelty is on the physical and psychological transformation of the spectator. Through individual abreaction and subsequent spiritual healing, Artaud extends the catharsis to a type of communal healing process.”¹⁶⁴

The People’s Theatre focuses on specific issues. The themes of People’s Theatre are taken from the bleeding points of human life. They are marked by their immediacy to events of oppression and suffering. In other words, People’s Theatre deals with those issues that are of immediate and burning relevance to the people to help them find ways of tackling them.

Style, Longinus on the Sublime, trans. John Warrington (Everyman’s Library, London: Dent and New York: Dutton, 1963; reprint, 1969) 12.

¹⁶¹ Boal, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, 47.

¹⁶² “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, 190.

¹⁶³ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double (Le Theatre et son Double, 1938)*, trans. Mary C. Richards, fourth printing (New York: Grove Press, 1958) 30.

¹⁶⁴ Gene A. Plunka, “Antonin Artaud: The Suffering Shaman of the Modern Theater,” in *Antonin Artaud and the Modern Theater*, edited by Gene A. Plunka (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994) 24.

3.6.3. Its narrative format

People's Theatre tells the stories of the people or the stories that are of immediate relevance to the people making use of the medium of the theatre. Theatre is storytelling medium. People's Theatre provides scope for presenting the experiences and the perceptions of participants. Many of these stories have never been told before, perhaps because there were no listeners, perhaps because there was no occasion, or simply because the storytellers lacked the courage to tell them. Now they are being told in the idioms of the people to an expectant audience. The pains and agonies of the people are being shared, their hopes and aspirations are being aired, their anger and protest are being voiced, and their accumulated wisdom is being imparted in the setting of their everyday life. People are being enlightened, their eyes are being opened, and they pick up lessons for their present and their future. They grow in solidarity with others who share their plight and are filled with new courage to engage in the struggle for justice.

People's Theatre employs simple, direct, down-to-earth modes of communication and familiar, available, traditional channels of communication. KSSP (Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad), for instance, makes use of street theatre, *jathas* (processions or marches) and rallies to bring the message of literacy to the person on the street. No doubt the messages, that are aimed to reach the illiterate and the untutored, small children and villagers, appeal to one and all.

People's Theatre is good entertainment; it touches emotions and provides for participation and celebration. It can change the mind by appealing to the heart. People's Theatre is an effective approach to social transformation through education and entertainment.

3.6.4. Its dramatic character

People's Theatre is good theatre. Dramatic communication has several points of strength. These are outlined here to see how they strengthen this popular mode of communication.

Drama is a well-planned and structured piece of *artistic communication*. It conveys meaning. Through the effective use of light and darkness, sound and silence, movement and stillness a dramatic performance unveils a plot, shares an experience, evokes a memory, or provokes an attitude.

Drama is *symbolic*. Martin Esslin says, "A dramatic performance must, at the most basic level be regarded as essentially a process by which information about the actions that are to be

mimetically reproduced is conveyed to the audience.”¹⁶⁵ Meaning is conveyed symbolically and metaphorically. This is necessitated primarily because drama is a highly condensed form of communication. Esslin says, “*All dramatic performance is basically iconic: every moment of dramatic action is a direct visual and aural sign of a fictional or otherwise produced reality.*”¹⁶⁶ He says elsewhere, “*Metaphor and symbolism inhere in the very nature and fabric of drama.*”¹⁶⁷ Again that “*the theatre is a simulacrum – at its highest level, ordered and elevated to the state of art – of the real world and real life.*”¹⁶⁸ Drama is often complex in its symbolic expression in relation to different spectators in varying times and contexts. Esslin says, “*The dramatic text must, thus, of necessity, be multivalent, synchronically by meaning different things to different individuals at any given moment; and diachronically, in the course of time.*”¹⁶⁹

Drama is an *intense and focused* mode of communication. Drama provides a slice of life, a choice cut as it were. With deftness and art it chooses and mixes vignettes from the saga of life to share with the audience the taste of an ocean in a mere water-drop. That is the power of the theatre. Esslin says, “*Art condenses, clarifies, orders and enhances in its mimesis what is chaotic, amorphous, murky and inconsequential in ‘reality.’*” Kirsten Hastrup says, “*Evidently it [theatre] differs from everyday life, or there would be no point in making theatre; but the difference is one of condensation. Theatre is a concentrate of action, which is what makes it so (potentially) powerful.*”¹⁷⁰

Good theatre unravels its story *in communion with the audience*. A script comes alive in dramatic performance or theatre when it is performed before an audience with a view to eliciting its response. The interaction and the communion between the actor and the performer are vital for the success of the play. Esslin says, “*The element which distinguishes drama from these kinds of fiction is [i.e. ‘narrative fiction and epic poetry’], precisely, that of ‘performance’, enactment.*”¹⁷¹ In this audience-performer transaction both have an equally important role to

¹⁶⁵ Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama: How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning on Stage and Screen* (London: Methuen, 1987) 16.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁷⁰ Kirsten Hastrup, “Theatre as a Site of Passage: Some Reflections on the Magic of Acting,” in *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 30.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

play. Esslin believes that dramatic performance is centred on the actor. But he concedes that the audience also has an essential role in the performance, since apart from its response the effectiveness of the performance cannot be assessed. He says, "The artist who performs the mimetic action, the actor, thus stands at the very centre of the art of drama. The art form truly specific to drama is the art of acting."¹⁷² Esslin agrees: "The skill of the creators of any dramatic performance in issuing and weaving together their multifarious structures of signs can have its impact only if the spectators exposed to them know what they stand for."¹⁷³ Richard Southern emphasises the role of the audience, when he says, "The essence of the theatre lies in the impression made on the audience by the manner in which you perform. Theatre is essentially a reactive art."¹⁷⁴

According to Jerzy Grotowski, the direct, "live" communion between the actor and the spectator is "the irreducible minimum" of the theatre. That aspect constitutes pure theatre, or in Grotowski's terminology, "poor theatre." The rest are only the paraphernalia, which are quite optional. He says,

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. This is an ancient truth.¹⁷⁵

Therefore Grotowski's effort was "to abolish the distance between actor and audience" by removing all the barriers that is set by the stage and other non-essential elements.¹⁷⁶

Theatre is a corporate act. Esslin says, "A dramatic performance ... unlike linguistic utterance and, indeed, the products of other arts, is never the work of a single individual, mirroring a single individual's intention to communicate."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷³ Esslin, *The Field of Drama*, 139.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Southern, *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962; reprint, 1973) 26.

¹⁷⁵ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugeno Barba (London: Methuen, 1968; reprint, 1975) 18-19.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷⁷ Esslin, *The Field of Drama*, 20.

The elements mentioned above are characteristics of theatre in general. People theatre combines these dramatic qualities. Further, it appeals to common people mainly because it is *entertaining*. Being theatre, it touches the emotions. Since messages that touch the heart do not fail to evoke a response, People's Theatre becomes effective in its own way. Theatre becomes celebration when its message provides hope instead of despair, and encouragement instead of condemnation.

People's Theatre examines issues at several levels. Its social, political, economic and religious aspects are subjected to close scrutiny. This is possible because theatre is a medium that can bring together several levels of human experience. It is a total art that can reflect the complexity and the comprehensiveness of the human experience by the enmeshing of different facets and vicissitudes of life:

3.6.5. Its pedagogical effectiveness

The aim of People's Theatre is to conscientise, that is, to create awareness in the community about its own problems and of the problems of others who suffer exploitation and oppression.¹⁷⁸ The participants suggest and experiment with many possible solutions, which they try out in the laboratory of the theatre. This process is an "active learning" process in the line of Freire's pedagogical theory. Here the student is the subject as well as the object of learning. Sonja Kuftinec discovered what active learning could achieve when she successfully used Boal's dramaturgy and other theatre techniques to bring re-orientation and hope to a group of disillusioned Bosnian refugee youths in Croatia in 1995 and '96. She says,

Active learning refers to a pedagogical approach that encourages students to engage in reflection, questioning, and commentary, prompting synthesis and analysis of

¹⁷⁸ While discussing the dramatic qualities of ritual, Esslin remarks about the pedagogical effectiveness of both ritual and theatre; the pedagogy could be either oppressive or liberative. He says,

In ritual as in theatre a human community directly experiences its own identity and reaffirms it. This makes theatre an extremely political, because pre-eminently social, form of art. And it is of the very essence of ritual that it not only provides its congregation (or in theatrical terms its audience) with a collective experience on a high spiritual level, but also in very political terms teaches them, or reminds them of, its codes of conduct, its rules of social coexistence. All drama is therefore a political event: it either reasserts or undermines the code of conduct of a given society.

See Martin Esslin, *An Anatomy of Drama* (London: Temple Smith, 1976) 29.

information, as opposed to the passive listening and regurgitation prompted by the lecture format.¹⁷⁹

Kuftinec says that community-based theatre can encourage active learning. Participation in such theatre process can enable people to find their voice, to ask questions and to arrive at answers in a spirit of total freedom.¹⁸⁰

The purpose of the theatre here is to create proper awareness and enlightenment necessary for a just and wholesome life in the community.

3.6.6. Its conformity to cultural ethos

The People's Theatre has its moorings in the cultural ethos of the community. The socio-economic and the religious situation of the community and the needs of the people set its agenda. Similarly the People's Theatre finds its resources in the community.¹⁸¹ The pace and the tempo of life in the community decide the format and character of each performance.

¹⁷⁹ Sonja Kuftinec, "Odakle Ste? (Where Are You From?): Active Learning and Community-based Theatre in Former Yugoslavia and the US," in *Theatre Topics* 7 (1997): 172.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. The idea of the didactic function of the theatre is emphasised in the ancient Indian theatre tradition. According to tradition, the Indian treatise on theatre, *Natyasastra* (present form 4th or 6th century A. D.) is considered to be a gift of Brahma. This was to supplement the four Vedas or foundational scriptures of Hinduism, which were accessible only to the higher castes. But *Natyasastra*, the 'Fifth Veda,' would be accessible to all castes, and will be a source of entertainment as well as enlightenment. This is based on a story narrated in the first chapter of *Natyasastra*. See A. Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1971) 2-3. See also *The Natyasastra: a treatise on ancient Indian dramaturgy and histrionics*, ascribed to Bharata-Muni, translated by Manomohan Ghosh (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1956-61).

According to Rangacharya, the main object of *The Natyasastra* is to set limits on what should be shown and not shown in the theatre. *The Natyasastra* asserts:

What one hears and what one sees must be good, decent, decorous, pleasing, elevating and instructive. What is to be shown is the ways of the world (*loka-charita*) and the doings of men, so that the audience gets education and guidance; otherwise, drama cannot be considered as the fifth Veda (Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre*, 10).

¹⁸¹ The struggles of the poor provide a mine of resources for great artists. Syed Ashraf records his interview with the successful Hindi movie comedian Johnny Lever. In his pre-movie days, Johnny used to be a simple slum-dweller of Wadala North. But today he lives in a swanky apartment in a posh locality in Mumbai. Johnny is not ashamed to give credit where it is due; he says that he owes his wit and wisdom to the poverty-stricken communities in Wadala North. If his words are to be taken at their face value, he continues to maintain his closeness with his friends in the slum area. He puts it this way, "I stick with the lower classes. Comedy happens only at that level, never in the upper class homes. You don't see comedy in these big buildings [where] every person protects himself, hides himself". Syed Firdaus Ashraf, "Johnny Johnny Joker" in *Rediff on the Net* (online edition, 18 December 1998).

Habib Thanvir made use of the folk forms of Chattisgarh and Badal Sircar used minimal pops and limited spaces to bring the theatre close to the culture and the day-to-day life of the community. The KSSP presentations are characterised by the earthy texture of their poetry and music, and the rustic quality of their dramaturgy, which are rooted in the life of the villagers who are its performers. They draw deeply from the inner strength of Dalit and tribal aesthetics.

3.7. Conclusion

People's Theatre denotes a type of educational, political theatre that is popular in the countries of the South. It has a strong theoretical and artistic base in the instructional theatre of Bertolt Brecht and the interactive theatre of Augusto Boal. It has its justification in the educational theory of Paulo Freire. Its Indian versions are to be found in the dramaturgy of Utpal Dutt, Habib Thanvir, and Badal Sircar. This chapter began with a discussion on the legitimacy of using resources from the theatre for liturgical renewal. The chapter also has provided an outline of the nature and influence of the People's Theatre in the South, especially in India and in the state of Kerala. The discussion of the theoretical foundations of the People's Theatre furnishes clues to its aims and objectives. The strengths of People's Theatre are many; its weaknesses could be rectified in the church's use. It is with that perspective that its resources for liturgical renewal in Kerala were identified. Now what remains is the challenging task of conceiving a liturgical format that makes profitable use of the narrative, pedagogical, and dramatic resources of the People's Theatre.

The Christian liturgy is 'People's Theatre' played out on the arena of the church that declares the wonderful needs of him who called it out of darkness into his marvellous light as it proclaims the Lord's death until he comes.

Chapter Four

“PEOPLE’S EUCHARIST”: THE CONCEPT AND THE METHOD

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens the wits of another.

--Prov. 27:17 (REB)

Each of us has stories to tell that allow the divine narrative to unfold, and all human stories are potential windows to the story of God.

-- Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley¹

4.1. Introduction

This and the following chapter belong together as they home in on the concept, shape and practice of the People's Eucharist. The term, “People’s Eucharist,” does not imply that the Eucharist is a singularly human activity. On the other hand, the term is used to stress the aspect of people’s participation in the Eucharist. The eucharistic worship is at its best when the people of God engage in worship actively and not passively, personally and not by proxy.

People’s Eucharist is a dramatic version of the Eucharist that makes use of the methodology of the People's Theatre. It encourages and facilitates the maximum involvement of the congregation in the liturgy. The worshippers blend their voices in grateful praise for the gift of salvation, healing and reconciliation from God. They enter into joyful, meaningful and equitable relationships with one another. They become conscious of their missionary calling and, in obedience to that call, rededicate themselves as members of a servant community.

The last part of the previous chapter dealt with the salient features of the People's Theatre that are of relevance to liturgical renewal in Kerala. This chapter will show how those features may be used to bring new life to the liturgy. The People’s Eucharist takes shape when the following changes are effected in the liturgical worship of the church:

- Repossession of the Eucharist by the laity
- Re-focussing on transformation and liberation

¹ *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 1998) xiii.

- Recovery of the narrative
- Retrieval of the dramatic
- Recapture of the didactic, and
- Reaffirmation of culture

4.2. Repossession of the Eucharist by the Laity

People's Eucharist reinstates the laity in their central role in worship. Ostensibly the CSI liturgy of the Eucharist attaches much importance to lay and congregational participation. The rubrics of the "Order of the Holy Eucharist" says, "The parts appointed to the deacon in reading the litany, leading the worship of the people, and assisting the presbyter in the administration of the communion, may be taken either by another presbyter or by a layman."² The lay members may read the lessons and offer liturgical and extempore prayers and assist the presbyter in every way. During the service, the presbyter faces the congregation in a symbolic posture that acknowledges the presence of the worshipping assembly and the presence of Christ in its midst. The congregation participates by means of frequent oral responses making the worship a lively and joyful experience.

The high degree of participation that the CSI liturgy envisages is not seen very much in practice. The eucharistic worship in the CSI is essentially clergy-centred. The presbyter who presides over the Eucharist is in a position of domination by virtue of his office while the laity have a subsidiary role of passive receivers. Ordinarily, the laity do not play any role in the planning or preparation of the worship. This situation inhibits the full exercise of the liturgical ministry of the laity.

William Barclay finds that the clerical domination at the eucharistic worship of many churches today is in marked contrast to the situation in the early church where there were no separate priestly roles in the church.³ Barclay says, "When the Church was house church, as it was in the beginning, as in the case of the Passover, so in the case of the Lord's Supper, it is entirely probable that it was the head of the household who presided at the sacrament." Barclay quotes *Didache* and Justin Martyr's *First Apology* in support of the view that

² CSI, *The Book of Common Worship*, "Directions to Ministers," xi. The term "worship of the people" refers to the verbal responses of the people.

³ William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (London: SCM Press, 1967) 102-103.

originally presidency at the Eucharist was a lay prerogative.⁴ According to Barclay, clerical predominance can be traced to Ignatius who insisted that the celebration of the sacraments was the sole prerogative of the clergy, meaning the bishop and those who are authorised by him for the purpose.⁵ Barclay points out that the claim for clerical domination at worship became firmly entrenched when the transubstantiation of the communion elements came to be associated with the priest's celebration of the Eucharist.⁶

Herbert Haag, a Roman Catholic theologian, in his book *Clergy and Laity: Did Jesus Want a Two-Tier Church?*⁷ argues that the insistence upon clerical presidency at the Eucharist (or for that matter priesthood itself), has no justification whatsoever in the teaching of Jesus and that it was a late (third century A.D.) development in the history of the church. According to Haag, the clericalism of the present day church is contradictory to the teaching of Jesus who had opposed the temple-centred, priest-dominated religious practices during his public ministry. Haag is convinced that the Christian concept of priesthood is related to the view that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. "Where there is sacrifice, there, in the thinking of the time, there must also be a priest."⁸ He admits also that a clerical order must have become a necessity on account of special needs for leadership in the church; but then, he argues, this arrangement need not be legislated as valid for all times and conditions. Haag has a point when he contends that clerical leadership in the church and clerical presidency at the Eucharist are not indispensable for the church.

Having said that one must look at the reasons calling for clerical presidency at the Eucharist. Bishop Newbigin has pointed out its need as a symbol of the church's unity.⁹ Newbigin affirmed that while the lay people are equal participants in the priestly ministry of Christ with the ministers of the church, the minister has a special status as a ritual representative of the whole church; therefore his presidency at the Eucharist is a symbol of the catholicity and the unity of the church of God.

⁴ *Didache* 10.7; *First Apology* 65.

⁵ Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 6.1; *To the Trallians* 2.1f.; 8.1f., 9.1. The references are from Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 102-103.

⁶ Barclay quotes Pope Leo XIII's epistle, *Apostolicae curae*, which refers to the special spiritual endowments of the priests. See *The Lord's Supper*, 103.

⁷ Herbert Haag, *Clergy and Laity: Did Jesus Want a Two-Tier Church?* Trans. Robert Nowell, (Turnbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1997).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, "Lay Presidency at the Eucharist," *Theology* 99 (1996): 367-368. See above, Ch. 1, sec. 1.3.2.

But as it was pointed out earlier, it is not the question of who presides over the Eucharist but rather the need for active participation that is at issue here. It is definitely good for the congregation to have the professional services of a trained minister and theologian who is able to devote his time and energy to lead the congregation. Those are required for the efficient management of the organisational aspects of the eucharistic worship. But will the church make equal use of the talents and spiritual endowments of the laity? Can lay people participate in the Eucharist as its resource people, as its active players (performers)? Can they function as members of a 'worship leadership team'?

Going back to the People's Theatre one notices that, true to the meaning of the term, it is people-centred. It is a theatre for the self-instruction and empowerment of the community. Therefore audience participation is indispensable to People Theatre; it is desired that every one in the community, without discrimination, would play a part in its performance. Consequently, as it was mentioned earlier, there is no spectator-performer dichotomy in People's Theatre. Boal calls the participants in his theatre "spect-actors," indicating their active role in the performance.

If the church recognises the call, the gifts, and the ministry of the laity in liturgical life, the clergy-laity dichotomy will vanish. The laity will be able to exercise their spiritual gifts along with the clergy in worship. It will definitely result in spiritual development of individuals and total growth of the whole congregation. The laity will realise their spiritual prerogatives as 'fellow workers with God' (1 Cor. 3:9). For, the laity together with the ministers of the church are members of a 'holy priesthood' (1 Pet. 2:5).¹⁰

The Lord in his public ministry liked to be among ordinary people and to receive their love and adoration. It is only in the fitness of things that ordinary men and women may be able to express their love to Christ, worship him, and celebrate the Lord's Supper in an environment free of institutional interference and professional ostentation. That is what the People's Eucharist attempts to emphasise. Per Harling points out that, following the Second Vatican Council, worship has undergone great "democratisation" in many churches and the lay

¹⁰ Herbert Haag denies that there is any idea of priesthood in this passage. He argues that the author of the epistle is using the quotation from Exod. 19:5-6 to bring consolation to the Christian diaspora in Asia Minor; these suffering Christians have been chosen by God in the place of the old Israel. Haag is convinced that it is not possible to base a theology of universal priesthood on one portion of a quotation that does not have an independent meaning. When he says, "The New Testament does not recognise any priesthood, whether sacramental or universal," (p. 72), he is not referring to the priesthood of Christ but of Christians. Basing his argument on the Letter to the Hebrews, he observes that with the perfect and once for all sacrifice of his own self that Jesus has offered, there is no need for any more sacrifice or priesthood. Haag says, "By offering himself Jesus has completed his work. This means that from now on there can no longer be any other sacrifice and at the same time any priesthood (7:27, 9:12, 10:11-18). See Herbert Haag, *Clergy and Laity*, 68.

people are taking an active part in worship. Harling finds that in many congregations, “the pastor is no longer the one who plans and does everything, but now functions more as a worship co-ordinator, with a special role in most traditions for administering the sacraments and teaching.”¹¹ Evidently, according to Harling, there is an appreciation of Apostle Paul’s injunction in 1 Cor. 14:26, where he exhorts the church to enrich worship by making use of the spiritual gifts of individual worshippers. This is an ideal for all churches, including the CSI, to follow.

The purpose of People’s Eucharist is to enable the faith community to draw wisdom and strength from God and Christ through the Spirit, so that it may be challenged to serve those who suffer including victims of oppression. The People’s Eucharist accords the laity a central role in the eucharistic worship. This is made possible, by enabling the worshippers to be conscious of their prerogatives as members of a priestly community. Worshippers involve themselves in the planning of worship, participate in the sharing of stories and biblical insights, and in all other aspects of worship.

As a liturgical format, People’s Eucharist allows maximum participation for the laity. Lay members lead the major part of the worship: adoration, confession, Bible readings, intercession, offertory, administration of the sacraments, and final thanksgiving. The theme of the worship is enlightened by readings from the Word of God (the story of salvation) and the ‘stories of the people.’ The latter are presented in a variety of formats, ranging from oral presentations to dance, drama and mime, recitations, readings, or audio- and video presentations. The stories are not confined to the experiences of the participants, but concern people everywhere and tell of their joys and sorrows, their suffering and release from suffering.

Passive and unrepentant ‘worshippers’ cannot celebrate or experience the benefits of communion with the living Christ. When worshippers keep themselves away from involvement and participation, there is no Eucharist for them, there is no communion in their experience; opposites are not reconciled; rivalries are not resolved; disparities are not overcome. But then the Eucharist challenges what it cannot resolve; it condemns what it cannot overcome. Eucharist is always a strong indictment and judgement on falsehood and hypocrisy; it challenges all evil and destructive tendencies that threaten the unity and welfare of humanity and of the created order, and militate against God’s work of salvation and new creation. Therefore even when the response is weak, the Eucharist must continue to be

¹¹ Per Harling, *Worshipping Ecumenically: Orders of Service from Global Meetings with Suggestions for Local Use* (Geneva: WCC, 1995) 4-5.

celebrated. The story must be told again and again; it must alert people of God's judgement on sin and evil; it must call people, nay, the whole creation to communion and reconciliation with God. The worshippers should submit themselves to this transformation and take the opportunity to bear witness to the liberation that has taken place in their lives. The worshipping assembly should shudder and examine its own life and repent of ways in which wittingly or unwittingly it engages in oppression and supports regimes of tyranny and exploitation.

The People's Eucharist will bring to fruition the aspirations of the first formulators of the CSI liturgy who desired the active participation of the laity in worship. In the People's Eucharist, the participation of the people goes beyond the expectations of Vatican II, which desires the "full, conscious and active participation" of the faithful in worship.¹² The participation of the laity in the People's Eucharist extends far beyond intellectual involvement in worship to areas of liturgical planning, development and adaptation, and eucharistic mission. Their participation involves physical, intellectual, and emotional engagement in worship.

4.3. Re-focusing on Transformation and Liberation

People's Eucharist seeks transformation and liberation. Liberation is transformation from a situation of deception, exploitation, bondage and oppression. One may say that transformation is the eucharistic mission of the church. It is Christ who brings about transformation (cf. Mk. 1:14-20) by calling people to repentance, faith and obedience, in other words, to a life of discipleship. It has implications for the whole being of the individual and communities and in the whole gamut of social relations within the community. Such change is not brought about by coercion or legislation; it is rather induced by gentle persuasion and enabling and involves a change of heart.

During his public ministry, Christ endowed ordinary men and women (and children) with a vision of a totally new world, namely, the Kingdom of God. He challenged them to give up their self-centred life for a God-centred life (cf. Mk. 10:21). If they believed him and followed him he would make them those who "fish for people," "the salt of the earth," or "the light of the world," or people whose "names are written in heaven." Christ transformed their lives, liberated them from the miserable, dingy prisons of their self-centredness and set their hearts on fire with the challenge of a world-wide missionary task. Christ transformed

¹² See the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Section 14, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 144.

them into the ministers and apostles of the Kingdom of God. Later these people were unwittingly characterised by their detractors as those who “have turned the world upside down.” Such is the change that Christ brings about in human lives. The same Christ who makes his presence felt thorough his Spirit at every celebration of the Eucharist continues to transform lives. He turns the insipid water of human lives into tasty, life-giving wine. He takes broken lives and makes them channels of God’s grace and new life in the world.

The Good News of Christ is an announcement of liberation (cf. Lk. 4:16-21; Jn. 8:31, 36). The cross and resurrection of Christ proclaims victory over powers of darkness (cf. Gal. 5:1; Col. 2:15). The Eucharist announces this victory of Christ. The Gospel of Christ that is proclaimed at every celebration of the Eucharist is a battle cry against every form of deception, injustice, exploitation, tyranny, discrimination, and enslavement. The People’s Eucharist sets the stage for the proclamation of the liberation and transformation that God brings about by means of the incarnation, passion, resurrection and intercession of Christ.

The paradigm for liberation is the suffering of the Saviour who did not use force to destroy his oppressors. On the contrary, he showed the willingness to take the brunt of their violence on himself to prove that hatred and violence can never quench his spiritual vigour or forestall the coming of God’s Kingdom. Brute force used against Christ served but to enhance the dazzle of his spiritual might and indefatigable glory of his Spirit. Consequently, sin was defeated and liberation was mediated for the oppressed and offered even to the oppressor.

The methodology of the theatre is a handy means in preparing the believing community for transformation. Theatre in general is concerned with transformation of the audience in one way or another. The great theorists of the theatre, Aristotle, Brecht, Artaud, Boal and others, each in his own way, have envisaged the transformation of the audience/participants as the goal of the theatre.¹³ People’s Theatre focuses on change and liberation. It concentrates on the burning issues of the people. Its practitioners use the theatre to find solutions for specific issues that affect human life and development.

¹³ Boal relates a Forum Theatre experience with a group of street boys and girls in Brazil who wanted to portray interactions within a typical unhappy family. There was of a drug addict in the family, one who would not communicate with the others but sulked always. One ‘spect-actor,’ a teenaged girl, taking the role of the addict’s sister, clowned about and engaged in all kinds of silly antics to catch his attention. Boal thought that the girl was overacting. But to his surprise, at the conclusion of the play everyone was full of praise for the role taken by the girl. Asked the reason for their appreciation, they said, “She made her brother smile.” See Augusto Boal, “She Made Her Brother Smile,” in *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism*, ed. Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 81-83.

God in Christ challenges the church and the world to change and to be transformed. But sadly in the church, there is a widespread tendency to neglect the connection between the Eucharist and transformation. Worshippers attribute the transformation to the communion elements and neglect the call for their own conversion. They forget that it is they who must change first of all in the living presence of the Risen Lord who is present as the host of the Lord's Supper. In the role of the ideal host, Christ offers not only food and drink but also his own self;¹⁴ he assures the faithful of his abiding presence even unto the end of the times. Since change is to be expected wherever Christ is present, the church must expect, pray and hope for liberation from bondage for all the oppressed and the enslaved ones of this world.

People's Eucharist is a result of rethinking about the meaning and purpose of the sacraments. Such rethinking is in evidence in the following instance. Referring to the situation in the new South Africa, the "Kairos Theologians" called upon the churches to modify their church activities and to re-focus their worship and ministries on the specific needs of the poor and the oppressed who are yearning for liberation. The "Kairos" document says,

Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same church activities must be reappropriated to serve the real religious needs of all people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.¹⁵

These words are true to the situation in the Church of South India as well. The CSI has to refocus its ministry and sacraments on the missionary task of the church, seeking justice for the landless, the unemployed, the poor, the oppressed, and the abused in the society. The church has to combat the growth of unethical social, political and economic practices. It should pay attention to the yearning of people who seek liberation from suffering and exploitation.

4.4. Recovery of the Narrative: Liturgy as Storytelling

Theatre is a way of storytelling. People's Theatre attempts to use the entertaining aspect of storytelling to reach the human conscience. The entertaining medium is used as the vehicle of the not-so-entertaining realities of suffering, exploitation and oppression of men, women,

¹⁴ See above, Ch. 1, sec. 1.3.3.

¹⁵ See The Kairos Theologians, "The Kairos Document, 1985" in *Between Christ and Caesar: Classic and Contemporary Texts on Church and State*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicentio (Cape Town: David Philip and Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986) 267.

and children.¹⁶ As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the method of the People's Theatre is to change the mind by changing the heart.

The purpose of the People's Eucharist is to recapture the narrative format of the Eucharist. The best use of the liturgical narrative can be made when many participate in its narration. In this process the participants have the privilege of sharing in the work of the master-narrator, Christ himself. The worshippers are encouraged to narrate their stories and the stories of others to show how people face suffering, exploitation and oppression with a view to resist, combat and put an end to them. These narratives may take the form of oral presentations or of artistic performances including drama. They must naturally lead to the sharing of stories and insights from the Bible.

4.4.1. The narrative format of the gospel:

People's Eucharist demands a narrative format because it tells the story of a great salvation. It concerns our Saviour who was a great storyteller himself. His stories provoked his listeners and enabled them to re-examine their lives in the light of his narrative. Today Jesus the storyteller continues to encounter people through his stories, which challenge human attitudes, question beliefs, and judge relationships. But no one can understand a parable of Jesus unless he or she is caught up in it. No one can understand its meaning without getting inside it, just as no one can enjoy the beauty of a cathedral's stained glass windows without watching them from inside the building when the rays of the sun stream in through its glass panes. No one can understand Christ without belonging to him as listeners and disciples. Similarly the story of Jesus or the life of Jesus, which is the bread of life, is a veritable parable -- a puzzle or a riddle that the world has yet to make sense of. The Eucharist is a means of understanding and of enjoying close fellowship with Christ through participation in his life.

The Eucharist is the story of Christ who invites the worshippers to share their own stories. For the story of Christ is to be unravelled along with the stories of his people. He lives in their stories as much as they live in his stories. His story is not complete without mention of

¹⁶ To be lighthearted in the face of adversity is to make a faith statement. As Harvey Cox puts it, "Laughter is hope's last weapon." He continues, "Crowded in all sides with idiocy and ugliness, pushed to concede that the final apocalypse seems to be upon us, we seem nevertheless to nourish laughter as our only remaining defence." See *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 157.

his involvement in their lives. Their stories lose meaning and purpose when he does not figure in their episodes.¹⁷

To listen and to share in the story of Christ involves attaching oneself to Christ, as worshipper, follower and disciple of Christ. The sharing of true stories and personal narratives in the congenial atmosphere of worship implies the opening up of the lives of the worshippers before God, so that the Lord may see, hear, touch and heal broken lives, wounded hearts, and ruptured social relationships.

4.4.1.1. *The stories of Jesus, the "parabler":*

People's Eucharist has to take its lessons in narrative from Jesus, the storyteller. His listeners were mostly ordinary people, "tax-collectors and sinners." His teaching had to be geared to their capacity. Jesus' parables are simple, but their simplicity is 'deceptive.' They are simple stories with subtle meanings. They are replete with rich imagery gleaned from nature and everyday life. The parables of Jesus, as they come to us in the Gospels, are remarkably terse. The economy of words adds strength to the stories which, like the smooth stones of David, do not fall short of the target. Jesus used parables with a didactic purpose to communicate the message of the Kingdom of God (Mk. 4:33-34). His parables served various purposes: to clarify (e.g. Lk. 15), and at times, even to mystify and to hide the truth from the enemies of the Kingdom (Mk. 4:11-12). He used them to convict the antagonists (e.g. Mk. 12:1-11), to alert his followers (e.g. Mt. 25), and to enlist the listener's involvement (e.g. Lk. 10:29-37). Jesus used the parables to express the inexpressible. His parables communicate the values of the Kingdom and reveal its distinctive and incomparable texture (cf. Mk. 2:21 pars.). The parables fall like easy snow and bestow on the listeners (and readers) glimpses of the mind of a God who forgives the sinner and rejoices at his repentance, who sides with the widow, the poor, and the despised, and who subverts disorientated value systems.

¹⁷ Middleton and Walsh in their book, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, talks about the postmodern crisis in which people by rejecting all the traditional metanarratives have become "storyless" and desperate. The authors compare this predicament to that of the 'replicants' or genetically produced humans in the sci-fi movie *Bladerunner* who have neither past nor future but still reflect the human disillusionment by being morbidly concerned about their origins and their destiny. Middleton and Walsh say,

... The postmodern metanarrative, while calling into question the universal claims of all other stories and traditions, does not itself have the resources to enable us to live with integrity and hope in a postmodern world. In its revitalising of all stories as merely local constructs, coupled with its inability to recognise its own character as a metanarrative, the postmodern world view cannot sustain hope or empower us to live in the face of the ethical chaos and brutality that characterises the ending of modernity."

Jesus not only told parables, but also used parabolic actions, which were dramatic and highly symbolic. His miracles, his table fellowship with ordinary people, his cursing of the fig tree, triumphal entry into Jerusalem, cleansing of the temple, the Last Supper, and the washing of the disciples' feet are all enacted parables.

Crossan calls Jesus a "parabler."¹⁸ "Parable" according to Crossan is diametrically opposite to "myth." He argues that the function of myth is to bring reconciliation in a world of contradictions, to bring pattern among chaos. But parable, contends Crossan, "is a story which is the polar, or binary, opposite of myth. Parable brings not peace but the sword, and parable casts fire upon the earth which receives it."¹⁹ In other words, the purpose of the parable is to confront the listener with the blunt, shocking reality of life, of truth, and of God. Jesus' parables revealed to his audience not only what the Kingdom is, but also who Jesus was. Parables are stories (or symbolic actions) that provoke, challenge, criticise and judge the listener. Crossan characterises the parables of Jesus as

stories, which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of the story itself. They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such moments that God can touch us, and only in such moments does the kingdom of God arrive.²⁰

The narrative and parabolic character of Jesus' teaching brings his listeners into direct confrontation with the demands of the Kingdom of God and challenges them to make a response for or against the Kingdom. Crossan's definition of myth is debatable. But his description of the nature and purpose of Jesus' parables and parabolic actions is quite convincing and valid.

Jesus' stories have power. They are the means of mediating the truth and salvation of God to the whole world. Jesus not only told stories, he also composed an epic with his life penning it with his own sweat and blood. His incarnation in a sinful world, his identification with the dregs of humanity, his death on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension are major episodes in that story. At the Eucharist the church retells the story of Christ, which is the story of God's salvation. But that story needs to be illuminated by the Spirit of the Risen Christ who on the road to Emmaus accosted the confused disciples in the guise of a stranger

See J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995) 78.

¹⁸ John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Sonoma, CA: Eagle Books, 1988), Chapter 4: "Jesus as Parabler," 71-100.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

and interpreted to them the meaning of the Scriptures. They recognised him when he broke bread with them and in so doing opened their blind eyes to behold his glory. They later confessed that their hearts were burning within them when he was speaking to them on the road.

Stories have power. Therefore the People's Eucharist will thrive on stories. But its stories will derive power only insofar as they are brought into conjunction with the story of God's salvation and are illuminated by the light of the Gospel. They will have power only when the church shares them in the spirit of Christ. People's Eucharist is the Eucharist in story. Its justification is found in Jesus' parabolic communication.

4.4.2. A narrative format for the Eucharist

The narrative of the People's Eucharist has two components, namely,

- i) God's story
- ii) People's stories

These stories are narrated, or enacted, or presented employing a variety of art forms that involve as many members of the congregation as possible. The stories are brought together in the People's Eucharist so that the church may be transformed, liberated, sanctified to become a channel of new life for the whole world.

4.4.2.1. *God's story: sharing the story of salvation*

The following section deals with the factors involved in the church's narration of God's story. Liturgy tells the story of God's salvation accomplished in the person and work of Christ and now made available to every person through the Holy Spirit. In the beginning was the story; the apostolic church that remembered and told the story has now become part and parcel of the salvation history. The early believers preserved the memory of the passion and resurrection of Christ experiencing in them their new Passover from sin to salvation (cf. I Cor 5:7). Beginning from Jerusalem, from the day of the Pentecost, they proclaimed that story so zealously that their listeners were moved to faith and conversion. Those who experienced the transformation passionately shared the story with others outside the experience. So the church began to grow and continues to grow today. The Holy Spirit transforms the story of the redeemed people of God and makes it part and parcel of the story of God's salvation.

Rex E. Hunt points out that Christianity is a storytelling religion. He says, "In listening to and telling the stories of Jesus, the people of the early church 'made connections' between these stories and their own lives which 'made clear to them how God was present'."²¹

Richard Niebuhr, in his article "The Story of Our Life,"²² stresses the importance of history and historical narratives for Christian faith. He says, "We are in history as the fish in water and what we mean by the revelation of God can be indicated only as we point through the medium in which we live."²³ Christian proclamation is concerned with the saving self-revelation of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who lived in history, and who lives on today. His message comes to us today through the testimonies of a community of faith consisting of his disciples and followers. Their experience of God and his salvation is narrated through stories of their own transformation in their personal encounters with Jesus Christ.

Niebuhr points out the inevitability of personal and subjective experience for any statement about God and God's work of redemption. God is known as creator and redeemer in the context of personal deliverance under concrete historical circumstances. But "to know God is to be known of him."²⁴ Therefore, personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Lord is possible only through a leap of faith and a revolution in one's thinking (*metanoia*). Knowledge of God and his acts in sacred history are objects of experiential knowledge and one can partake of such knowledge only in the concrete circumstances of life and in the context of personal relationships that glue together a community of faith. This is where the sharing of personal narratives of faith becomes pertinent. Niebuhr views the Bible and the rites of the church as the most essential repositories that preserve the communal memory of the church.²⁵

²¹ Rex E. Hunt, "Storytelling is the Basis of Religious Communication," *Media Development* 40/3 (1993): 18. Hunt's citations are from Boomershine, T.E., *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1988) 19.

²² H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Story of Our Life," (originally published in his book, *The Meaning of Revelation*, New York: Macmillan, 1941, pp. 43-81) in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1989) 21-44.

²³ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

Michael Root puts his finger on the grounds of significance of the Christian story.²⁶ A *significant* story, according to Root, is one that is relevant and meaningful to the reader, a story that will illumine and transform his or her life. The Christian story becomes significant because it is "the story of the reader's redemption."²⁷ In other words, the Christian story holds redemptive significance for the reader. Therefore, "the reader is included in the Christian story."²⁸

Illustrations of the strength of people's interpretations of the Scriptures are available from the Latin American Basic Christian Communities. Ernesto Cardinal tells the story of a worshipping community, with which he was associated in Solentiname, "a remote archipelago on Lake Nicaragua."²⁹ The members of the community were *campesinos*, farm workers and fishermen. At their worship, instead of preaching, Cardinal would lead a dialogue on the Bible lessons for the day. People would offer their thoughts and ideas on the passage invariably exhibiting a rare spontaneity and wisdom that surpass the notions of erudite theologues. Cardinal remarks, "The commentaries of the *campesinos* are usually of greater profundity than that of many theologians, but of a simplicity like that of the Gospel itself...."³⁰ These people have whole-heartedly received the Word of God as it reached them in the midst of their life struggles and they had responded to it with touching sincerity and honesty. The effect is reciprocal. The Word has illuminated their dingy lives and lifted their humble spirits far above their humble estates; they in their turn cause new light to be shed on the Word of God. For example, while meditating on the *Magnificat*, on hearing the first verse, some one says about Mary, "She recognises liberation.... We have to do the same thing. Liberation is from sin, that is, from selfishness, from injustice, from misery, from ignorance --- from everything that's oppressive. That liberation is in our wombs too, it seems to me...."³¹ Alejandro's mother says, "To be a slave of God is to serve others. That slavery is liberation."³²

²⁶ Michael Root, "The Narrative Structure of Soteriology," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1989) 263-278.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁹ Ernesto Cardenal, *Love in Practice: the Gospel in Solentiname*, trans. Donald D. Walsh (London: Search Press, 1977).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³² *Ibid.*

People's Eucharist emphasises such a listening to the Word of God that will enable the Word to change lives. The community of the faithful must echo the Word from the depth of their experience of God's goodness so that its message will reverberate in the world and change it.

4.4.2.2. *People's stories:*

Human stories are composed of human experiences. Just as every person is valuable in the sight of God, every human experience is valid and possesses spiritual and eternal significance. For, it affects positively or negatively one's relationship with God. Human problems are God's problems too; so when the oppressed cry out God does not sit still but comes to their help (cf. Exod. 3:9; Isa. 57:15).

The purpose of including people's stories in the Eucharist is to enable the people to find meaning and purpose for their lives by juxtaposing their stories with the stories of God's salvation in the Bible. It enables the worshippers to seek divine wisdom and strength to find liberation from bondage and suffering. In addition, by telling and listening to stories of others, they feel solidarity with those who suffer in their community and around the world. The following example from the book, *Pastoral Theology from a Global Perspective*, aptly illustrates the importance of stories in worship:³³

In an address to a group of overseas visitors from Europe and North America, a Christian lay leader from Kenya said, "I understand that you pray for us regularly. You should know that we seldom pray for you!" The speaker responded to the startled looks on the faces of his guests by continuing, "because you don't share your problems with us, and we don't know how to pray for you."

The authors of *Pastoral Theology from a Global Perspective* point out that when the members of the worshipping community exhibit sufficient mutual trust as to share their problems, pains, hopes and aspirations with one another, they experience real solidarity in their common life. Further they receive sufficient illumination to move forward.³⁴

What is to be done with these stories? How are they going to be of use to the worshipping assembly in the liberation process? The authors mentioned above suggest three steps: first of all, use the stories to build awareness of situations of oppression, exploitation, and suffering. Secondly, analyse them objectively from, "theological, ideological and sociological" and

³³, Henry S Wilson, Judo Poerwowidagdo, Takatso Mofokeng, Robert Evans, and Alice Evans, *Pastoral Theology from a Global Perspective: A Case Method Approach* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996) 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

other points of view. Thirdly, let the stories provide the motivation for the worshippers to involve themselves in the struggles of the oppressed and the suffering ones and to fight the subversive forces operating in the society.³⁵ This is the rationale for focusing on the stories of the people in the People's Eucharist.

The Eucharist must interlace the human with the divine. Anderson and Foley point out that Jesus announced his message in the context of the human story thus enlightening and enriching the human predicament. With reference to the ministry of Jesus and the Lord's Supper, Anderson and Foley submit that always "the human story is heard first; only then is the divine narrative invoked. So was it in the beginning, and so it must be now if the Lord's Supper is to be the sustaining meal that the Christian tradition reveals it to be."³⁶ According to Anderson and Foley, the Eucharist gives shape to a new narrative in which the participants co-author a new narrative. They say: "The people who are part of the worshipping assembly are not the 'object' of the stories of salvation but participants and even coauthors in the work of a new narrative from human and divine stories."³⁷ So the Eucharist is then part of God's communication with the world and it is the product of God's saving interaction with ordinary human beings. The People's Eucharist provides an atmosphere for people to be more responsive and accessible to the activity of God in their lives and in the mission of the local congregation.

People's Eucharist mobilises the whole church to take up its part in the transformation and liberation that Christ brings to those who are enslaved by sin and sinners. It emphasises the participatory character of the Lord's Supper and challenges the participants to respond to God's initiative in Christ to bring reconciliation between God and humanity and within the human community. It brings the worshipping community closer to the passion and resurrection of Christ revealed in the midst of people who suffer with or without hope. People's Eucharist alerts the church to join Christ's liberating mission in the world.

In the People's Eucharist, People's stories are told alongside the story of God's salvation so that they may closely follow the contours of the salvation story. People's stories may be of several types. The two types given below are personal testimonies of Christian experience and stories of human suffering and oppression.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶ Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 159.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

a. Sharing testimonies of personal experience of salvation

Liturgy is an articulation of the experience of God's salvation in the life of the believing community and in the lives of its individual members. People's Eucharist sets great store by the narration of stories by God's people in the context of worship. The purpose is to enable people to look at their stories, not as isolated or meaningless accounts of human experience but as stories through which the light of God may shine forth to illuminate them, to show what is wrong with them, to make them creative experiences, and to help rewrite those stories as lustrous illustrations of salvation.

Accounts of personal experiences of God's liberating power are of great value. Personal stories are more valuable than theories about the Christian faith. According to William Bausch, in such stories one comes across real life experiences, not with figments of imagination or with unripe and unexamined propositions. He says, "Propositions are statements on a page; stories are events in a life. Doctrine is the material of texts; story is the stuff of life."³⁸

George Stroup points out that Christian narratives are accounts of the community's experience of God's goodness and redeeming work in the past. Therefore they render meaning to the present and assign purpose to the future. He says, "Because Christian narrative is an interpretation of the community's narrative history, Christians look to the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future."³⁹

The best place to share personal narratives is the congenial atmosphere of worship when the community of faith has gathered in the presence of God seeking solace, renewal, and divine guidance for its witness in the world. Alasdair MacIntyre in his article, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life, and the Concept of a Tradition,"⁴⁰ shows how one's personal narrative is inextricably bound up with the narratives of others in the community and of the narrative of the community itself. Therefore a personal narrative makes sense only when it is set in context, against the grand narrative of the community to which the author of the particular narrative belongs.

³⁸ William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, Seventh Printing (Mystic, Conn.: Twentythird Publications, 1991) 28.

³⁹ George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Books, 1984) 258.

⁴⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life, and the Concept of a Tradition," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1989) 89-110.

The members of the worshipping community must be able to recognise the corporate character of the Christian congregation. MacIntyre says that if life is a story then we are its co-authors rather than sole authors because others, who are bound together with us in the bundle of life, do play their part in the composition of our story, in shaping its plot and writing its episodes. He adds,

Each of us being a main character in his own drama plays subordinate parts in the dramas of others, and each drama constrains the others.... Each of our dramas exerts constraints on each other's, making the whole different from the parts, but still dramatic.⁴¹

So in order to make sense of our life and its inter-relatedness with the lives of others, we must recognise the entanglement of our story with theirs.

MacIntyre says, "Man [sic] is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal...."⁴² He clarifies that these stories play a pivotal role in shaping human life and behaviour in the society. In fact, stories provide valuable clues to the life of any given society. Stories are the best sources of enlightenment, and bereft of them human lives could go astray. As MacIntyre puts it, "There is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its dramatic resources."⁴³

It is apparent to MacIntyre that a good life or a meaningful and fulfilled life is comparable to a well-written story, balanced, purposeful and brought to a successful ending. But one cannot shape one's life by one's own effort. As it was mentioned earlier, there are many co-authors to one's life, parents, neighbours, whole communities, and even one's ancestors are involved in the formation of one's personal identity. MacIntyre says,

For the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from the past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid., 99.

⁴² Ibid., 101.

⁴³ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106.

That means to understand my story, I must to listen to the stories of others as well. MacIntyre's view that one's life is lived in solidarity with others is well taken. It also implies that one is responsible for one's acts, which affect the lives of others.

The authors of the book, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*,⁴⁵ Anderson and Foley emphasise the importance of stories and rituals in human life. According to them, "stories are privileged and imaginative acts of self-interpretation."⁴⁶ Stories are told to make sense of one's own life and to integrate one's memories of the past, experiences of the present, and hopes for the future. People make stories, and stories make people.⁴⁷ Stories have greater power to influence people than any other form of narrative.

The authors argue further that "the task of pastoral care is to help people reframe their lives in the light of God's story for the sake greater freedom and responsibility."⁴⁸ Stories and rituals have the power to transform the outlook of individuals and the community. Personal stories sum up the experience of individuals while rituals tell the story of communities. Both enable people to see their place in the "larger transcendent narrative" that God is authoring in his universe. Anderson and Foley remind the readers that "all human stories are potential windows to the story of God."⁴⁹ It is essential to help people to find the connection between their stories and God's story in order to make sense of their lives.⁵⁰

Rituals have a significant role here. "Storytelling and ritualising together provide vehicles for reconnecting God's story with our human stories."⁵¹ Churches have rituals but there is hardly any effort to relate the rituals to actual situations or experiences in the life of the people. This is in contradiction to the original intention of Sunday worship, which had its origin in "storytelling about transforming encounters" with God in Jesus Christ.⁵² The church must create an agreeable atmosphere for "telling and exploring" personal stories.⁵³ Public worship and sacred rituals have a very significant role to play here. Ritualisation is the process of weaving together the divine narrative and human stories. Ritualisation also

⁴⁵ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 1998).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 53.

precipitates a healing process as it helps a person to look objectively at his or her life.⁵⁴ As the authors put it:

Authentic Christian worship is a disturbing event. In worship God is present among us, challenging us to recognise sin, embrace our enemies, transform our lives, and proclaim the kingdom in the world. It is a dangerous, precarious, explosive undertaking.⁵⁵

The authors further see that in the ministry of Jesus, this ritualisation is seen in the parabolic events of his table-fellowship with ordinary people. In the free and open atmosphere of unpretentious and friendly meals people acknowledged their “need for forgiveness” and their “brokenness that required healing.” Jesus in his turn offered them forgiveness and reconciliation, healing and transformation by welding their shattered lives with the life of God himself by touching them with the flame of the Spirit.⁵⁶ These common meals, with their ritual and parabolic qualities, are crucial to any understanding of the work of Christ because they serve as the perfect foil for many outstanding facets of the life of Christ – his ministry of reconciliation, his promises of the kingdom and his encounter with his critics.⁵⁷

Anderson and Foley point out that in the days of his public ministry, Jesus first saw or listened to people in need before he responded to their situation by pronouncing the word of salvation. So also in today’s church, they suggest, the stories of the people should precede the proclamation of the Word of God.⁵⁸ The Sunday ritual of the Eucharist must remind people of the story of Christ and his dealings with sinful men and women, show them how he met them at their own level in ordinary gatherings for a meal and how he changed their lives by risking his own. The authors view the Lord’s Supper as a “dangerous ritual” that hides in its simple ceremonies a “mighty story” that demands costly obedience. It weaves together into a single strand, the seemingly ordinary, shabby and colourless human lives with the golden strands of the divine Spirit.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵⁷ About the Last Supper the authors say (*ibid.*):

It is remembered as the most sacred of meals in which his dying and rising were anticipated in a broken piece of bread and a shared cup of wine. Here earthly elements give up their previous way of life for a new, transformed existence. So too, were those who dared to share in these elements confronted with the challenge of a similar transformation. This meal, fashioned in the image of Jesus’ whole ministry and recalled in every Christian Eucharist, is a place where death is sampled in a loaf of bread; where tasting wine imperils life.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

In the earlier paragraphs several significant qualities of stories of personal experience were mentioned. Bausch has shown that the real value of personal stories is their authenticity because they are supported by real-life experiences. Stroup appreciates the role of personal testimonies of God's goodness in rendering meaning and hope to the history and experience of each community. Similarly MacIntyre as well as Anderson and Foley acknowledge the crucial significance of stories in bringing order and meaning into the stories of individuals and communities by grafting them into the salvation history that God authors. It is in the context of public worship and ritualisation that this amalgamation must take place. The church's worship should provide for storytelling and ritualisation that integrate human and divine stories. The validity of People's Eucharist is that it is an attempt to bring together the story of God, the story of the individual and the story of the community in the context of worship.

b. Sharing stories of suffering and oppression

The time of intercession is an appropriate occasion in the People's Eucharist for the congregation to pay attention to stories of oppression and human suffering and to pray for the liberation of those who are in pain and bondage. The church expresses solidarity with the victims of pain and suffering wherever they are, within the worshipping community or outside its boundaries.

Denise Ackermann⁶⁰ looks at the role of sharing and worship in small groups from the point of view of a South African feminist theologian. She expresses her faith in the strength and efficacy of small groups within the church to provide sustenance to people in pain. She believes that "small groups have much to offer people who are willing to share their stories."⁶¹ What is required is sincere sharing of stories in an atmosphere in which people will listen to one another with understanding and mutual respect. She is positive that such telling and listening will contribute to healing and liberation in the lives of the participants. Ackerman remarks,

But when these stories and the truths of our faith enter into conversation with one another, our longings for healing and wholeness and our faith in God's promises of a

⁶⁰ Denise M. Ackermann, "'A Voice Was Heard in Ramah': a Feminist Theology of Praxis for Healing in South Africa," in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Theologies in Context*, eds. Denise M Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998) 93-99.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

mended world, touch our consciousness in new ways. Momentarily we glimpse our restored humanity.⁶²

Strikingly enough, Ackerman stresses the importance of “communal lament.” She exhorts small groups to respond to expressions of brokenness, grief, remorse, or despair by its members. But mark Ackermann’s words when she says, “Lamenting is not enough. Having keened and raged, wept and repented, we then recognise two further needs: the first is to wait in faith; the second is to place the tears and the act of love in the communion cup.”⁶³ The healing is not complete until the grief leads to trust in God and the submission of the heart’s burden in the Eucharist. This will definitely lead on to thanksgiving and praise for the sense of acceptance and the experience of healing that one receives as burdens are taken away in the caring atmosphere of worship provided by supportive small groups. This affirms the faith that “the life, ministry and death of Jesus offers us new life.”⁶⁴

Addressing the new political and social situation in South Africa, Charles Villa-Vicentio also echoes the need for telling one another stories.⁶⁵ He believes that the sharing of stories will help the people to overcome their differences. It will promote self-understanding as well as mutual understanding; both are necessary. The author argues that the stories related to the history and experiences of different groups of people in South Africa ought to be shared in order that the nation may be built upon the right foundations of mutual understanding, mutual sympathy, and mutual appreciation. Not all stories can be articulated in words; some are better expressed in song, dance, poetry, and art. But these are the symbols that will unify the people. Villa-Vicentio quotes the South African author, Ellen Kuzwayo, who said, “If you cannot understand my story, you do not accept me as your neighbour.” She also said, “Stories help us to understand, to forgive, and to see things through someone else’s eyes.”⁶⁶ Villa-Vicentio states that true stories “reveal the sacredness of life.”⁶⁷ They cannot be shared with strangers. But an atmosphere for telling true stories must be created. For, “it is in the encounter of telling, hearing, and understanding that the reconciliation process can

⁶² Ibid., 95.

⁶³ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁵ Charles Villa-Vicencio, “Telling One Another Stories: Toward a Theology of Reconciliation,” chap. in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1997) 30-42.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 36-37.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 37.

begin.”⁶⁸ Reconciliation, unity, and the African community sense of *ubuntu* must come into being.⁶⁹

These are convincing arguments about the need, relevance and the effect of sharing stories are to be taken note of in the practice of the People’s Eucharist. The purpose of telling these stories is to bring unity, reconciliation and healing within the worshipping community and to build bridges of understanding between the church and the wider society. They will enable the church to experience something of the pain and the concern of God for the suffering ones of this world.

Stories shared at worship must go beyond accounts of personal pain and loss; there are many other stories related to exploitation and oppression of national and international dimension, which must weigh heavily on Christian hearts and minds. For example, note a case of international oppression that has repercussions for the economic condition of developing countries and the welfare of small and big farmers in those countries. In a letter to the editor of *The Sunday Times*, Vandana Siva raises the issue of the menace of genetic engineering and patenting.⁷⁰ One issue is the pressure on farmers in Asia and Africa to cultivate genetically manufactured crops in place of traditional ones. This is going to have serious economic and sociological implications for traditional societies. The other question concerns “biopiracy.” Multinational corporations, in the name of genetic engineering, are appropriating patent rights of plants and agricultural products that have their natural habitat in the developing countries (for example, turmeric and basmati rice). This is bound to result in a new variety of colonialism. This kind of situations should bring the people of God together in prayer and in action. For behind these issues lie the sad stories of the affected farmers and others in many countries, which need to be highlighted in worship.

Stories are the most valuable vehicles of human communication. As Don Cupitt puts it, “Stories are interpretative resources, models and scenarios through which we make sense of what is happening to us and frame our own action.”⁷¹ They help human societies to make sense of life. Walter Ong says, “In its barest pre-narrative facticity, human life is meaningless: indeed, it is not yet human at all. Meaning depends upon narrative. So to give

⁶⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁹ The term *ubuntu* “affirms an organic wholeness of humanity, a wholeness realised in and through other people.” See *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Vandana Siva, “Freeing Gene Genie will Bring Disaster,” “Letters to the Editor,” *The Sunday Times*, 21 February 1999.

⁷¹ Don Cupitt, *What is a Story?* (London: SCM Press, 1991) ix.

human life meaning, we must start telling stories. We've got to narrate it, that is, to fictionalise it."⁷² The secret is to tell stories in a way that will capture the attention of others; that is the art of storytelling. They must be told in contexts where they will be heard and acknowledged; that is precisely the role of fiction and art. In the People's Eucharist stories are told to bring them close to the story of God's salvation in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. The stories are shared in different ways. Oral presentations have their place. They may be supplemented with photographs, posters, flashcards, audio-visuals, videos, and so on. But the most effective presentations could take the form of drama. The narrative framework is the major strength of the People's Eucharist. It will bring unity and inner vitality and mission orientation to congregations.⁷³

4.5. Retrieval of the Dramatic

The aim of this section is to apply the insights and techniques of the people's theatre to the Eucharist so that the Eucharist may become an engrossing and enlightening artistic experience that appeals to the heart, mind and spirit. This will strengthen the link between the Christian ritual and theatre to the advantage of both. A renewed interest in the arts will enable the church to improve its relations with the larger society outside the church.

People's Eucharist employs dramatic communication primarily to enable the whole congregation to participate in worship actively and intelligently. It takes its lessons for its dramatic aspects from the People's Theatre. The introduction of the People's Eucharist is bound to have several implications for the worship of the local congregation, especially for its worship, its communication and its influence on the society. These are discussed below:

4.5.1. Rapprochement between the church and the theatre

In People's Eucharist the dramatic quality of the eucharistic worship will be restored. At this juncture it is necessary to trace the history of the mutual relationship between the church's worship and the theatre. This is to show where the drama fits in the curriculum of the church's worship and mission.

⁷² Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, (London and New York: Methuen, 1982) 98.

⁷³ There are quite a number of practical and organisational issues related to purposive and effective storytelling during the worship. These are tackled with the Kerala pastoral situation in mind in Appendix C.

The Eucharist is a ritual enactment of the Last Supper. The worshipping congregation confronts the living Christ who speaks the life-giving Word and endows the life-giving Spirit. In Christ the church and its individual members meet their God and their neighbours in the world. Such an encounter challenges human hearts to make a positive response to God's liberating mission in the world. It is the sense of the presence of God in Christ experienced by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that makes the Eucharist a service of Holy Communion.⁷⁴

Christ has endowed the church with a cosmic drama of salvation in the simple mimesis of the Last Supper. It is a transforming ritual for the church and the individual worshipper; it is a rite of passage from a self-centred to a God-centred universe. It is a reflexive, participatory drama and ritual where everyone is challenged to play his or her role. The church needs to recapture the drama of the Lord's Supper.

It is said that in the early epochs of Christianity, the church exhibited a "deep hostility" towards the theatre and the 'pagan shows' (*spectacula*) of the Roman Empire.⁷⁵ There were three major reasons for this apathy. Firstly, drama had associations with pagan religious rituals; secondly, they were characterised by obscenity and immorality; and thirdly, the church with its austere and ascetic ways was a far cry from the fun and frolic of the theatre.

Francis Edwards in his book, *Ritual and Drama*, deals with the origin and development of the medieval theatre in Europe.⁷⁶ According to him, the Middle Ages were characterised by a new relationship between the church and the theatre in Europe. This had a pastoral reason. In the Middle Ages, the majority of the Christian population in Europe was illiterate and steeped in poverty, misery and superstitious practices. In this context a Christian theatre originated with a catechetical mission, to teach the faith to the illiterate masses and to make clear to them the themes of the Bible and the significance of Christian festivals.

Edwards attributes to the medieval European theatre a religious origin within the church. The medieval church building compared well with a theatre building; the chancel reminded

⁷⁴ Driver says, "Genuine presence is mutual presence.... Sacraments, like sacrifices, are acts that generate intense presence. Worshippers make themselves present to each other and to God, receiving in turn the shock of God's presence among them" – *The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Magical Rites That Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) 210.

⁷⁵ E. A. Livingstone ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Church*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) s. v. "Christian Drama."

⁷⁶ Francis Edwards, *Ritual and Drama: the Mediaeval Theatre* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1976).

one of a theatre stage and the nave was similar to a theatre auditorium. They were designed to present an attractive ceremony to an expectant congregation. Edwards remarks, "The mediaeval church building was a theatre in the true sense of the word, namely, a place in which an act or performance by one or more persons can be witnessed or 'shared' by an audience or congregation."⁷⁷

Edwards believes that the 'sacrificial' ritual of the Mass, which was basically theatrical in design and performance, laid the foundation of the medieval theatre. He points out that the Mass had two components in theatrical terms: the first, *tragedy* in view of human fall from innocence, and the second, *comedy* (romantic comedy or divine comedy) in view of human redemption through the suffering of Jesus and his ultimate victory.⁷⁸ The central conflict is between God and the devil, between Life and death, between Light and the powers of darkness. Therefore a well-constructed plot, centred on the life and work of Christ, underpinned the celebration of the Mass.⁷⁹

Further, the celebration of the Mass in the medieval churches betrayed several dramatic features. Of special mention were the theatricality of the ceremonial entrance of the choir and the priests bedecked in colourful robes and their solemn procession, the rhythm and the music of the chants and hymns, the responsive intonation of prayers and anthems, the awe-inspiring use of the mysterious tongue of Latin (or Greek), the elaborate liturgical movements that reminded one of the dances of the Greek tragedies, the demeanour and the tone of the priest that set the emotional tempo of the celebration, the use of symbolic artefacts (the cross, vestments, bread and wine, etc.), the scope for the participation of the congregation (the audience) in the dramatic action through the ceremonies of the Kiss of Peace, the Offertory, and the partaking of communion elements. The overall outcome was a heightened "verbal, visual and emotional experience" both for the priest and for the congregation.⁸⁰

It is generally believed that the western theatre achieved a further stage of development in the Easter play, *Quem quaeritis* (Whom do you seek?), which probably originated in the tenth century in St. Gall in Switzerland. The title is taken from a responsive form of chanting called trope singing.⁸¹ It was a simple form of dramatisation in a question-and-

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 26-31.

⁸¹ Many early Christian plays have originated from trope singing (Edwards, *Ritual and Drama*, 37).

answer format, based on the gospel narrative of the empty tomb scene on the first Easter day. A set of 'actors' (members of the clergy) enacted this scripted musical playlet inside the church as a part of the service of the Mass. The actors wore simple costumes and the choir assisted in the trope singing in Latin. However simple and crude in design, *Quem quaeritis* was effective theatre indeed. As Edwards says, "Suddenly the theatre of ritual has become the theatre of the play."⁸²

Following the *Quem quaeritis*, several Latin musical playlets, connected with Christmas and Easter, made their appearance during church services all over Europe, as manuscripts from the thirteenth century have shown.⁸³ Then came a period of change. Gradually the Latin playlets presented by the clergy inside the church were replaced by lay productions in the common tongue of the people. One reason for this transition was the interest in this art form evinced by crafts and other guilds. This change was noticeable all over Europe, especially in Germany and England, in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. New plays based on biblical stories and themes were staged. The plays were called Miracle Plays or Mystery Plays. A popular trend was to develop a series of plays on one theme; these series were called 'cycles.' Series of plays based on biblical stories were known as Miracle Cycles (e.g. Chester Cycle, Cornish Cycle, York Cycle, etc.). Many of them summarised the whole narrative of the Bible in a play series. Some times these plays were staged inside the church, but it was normal to stage them outside the church, in town squares and other public places. The miracle plays finally lost their popularity in the sixteenth century following the impact of the Reformation; the new outlook engendered by the Renaissance also must have contributed to the disenchantment. But not less than two hundred plays are extant from the medieval period.⁸⁴

The second half of the fourteenth century saw the birth of the Morality Play. "It evolved largely from the sermon."⁸⁵ Morality plays allegorised the eternal conflict between sins and virtues. These were presented as human characters on the stage. These plays seem to have played a significant role in the church's ethical instruction and its fight against evil practices in the society. Among the morality plays, *Everyman*, is something of a classic. It has continued to enjoy popularity beyond the sixteenth century.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Edwards, *op. cit.*, 100.

The link between the Christian ritual of the Mass and the theatre in mediaeval Europe contributed not only to the elaboration of that ritual but also to the whole area of Christian nurture, theology and ethics of an epoch of Christian history. It contributed to the mission of the church by transposing Christianity from its esoteric confinement within the church building and made its truths accessible to the man on the street. While the miracle plays expounded the message of the Bible, the morality plays applied its ethics to human life. In short, theatre and Christian ritual served one another, replenished one another.

But unfortunately, in the course of time, the church and the theatre drifted away from one another. Theatre fell into worldly hands and began to exhibit vulgar tendencies. Therefore the Reformers on the whole adopted a negative attitude to theatre, which proved to be detrimental to both religion and theatre in the West. In the process of asserting independence of one another, both religion and theatre ran out of their resources. For, ritual without theatre is barren and theatre without religion lacks spirit and direction.

The above outline of the mutual relation between the church's worship and the theatre shows advantages and the disadvantages of such a linkage. The People's Eucharist will hopefully bring the theatre back into the worship of the church taking the best advantage of the effectiveness of theatre as a medium of communication and popular education.

4.5.2. Worship as an artistic experience

Theatre is comprehensive enough to accommodate all forms of art in its stride. Therefore People's Eucharist on account of its dramatic qualities has the potential to bring several forms of art into the church's worship.

Theatre unravels a story by means of a performance that involves the use of physical movements, narration, dialogue, silence, sound, light, darkness, and so on. Theatre has a visual aspect and an aural aspect. According to Morgan and Saxton, "focus, tension, contrast and symbolisation" are the distinguishing features of theatrecraft.⁸⁶ 'Focus' refers to the main plot on which the story is centred. 'Tension' is the mainspring of the dramatic action, which propels the story to its satisfactory conclusion. 'Contrast' between light and darkness, movement and stillness, sound and silence renders the theatre worth watching. 'Symbolisation' is the art of pointing beyond the actions or objects seen on the stage with the help of the spectator's imaginative capacities.

⁸⁶ Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton, *Teaching Drama: A Mind of Many Wonders* (Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes Ltd., 1989) 2.

To use these elements effectively in the People's Eucharist it is necessary to plan the worship properly. Details of such planning are dealt with in the next chapter. The following section mentions the factors involved in such an event:

Atmosphere (Context): The design of the place of worship is a vital element in the People's Eucharist. The surroundings of the building, its design, interior décor, the artefacts used in worship, the colour of draperies and linen, etc. -- all of these contribute to the total experience of worship ('Space speaks'; 'colour communicates'). The sanctuary is no more a place to listen to abstract ideas.

Source: If worship is a process of communication, then both God and God's people are its sources. But the Spirit of God is more active in worship than the congregation, whose privilege it is to listen to the voice of the Spirit.⁸⁷ The Spirit of God enables the church to communicate, to pray and to praise, to interpret the Scriptures, and to bear witness (Ps. 51:15; Isa. 6:7; Jn. 4:23-24; Rom. 10:15; Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:3; 14:13-15, *et passim*.).

Message: The church focuses on issues and seeks guidance from the Word of God.

Channel:

- a. People's Eucharist, which emphasises the dramatic format of worship, gives much importance to the physical aspects of communication in worship: the use of the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. The use of objects, colour and light, time, of space, movements, and silence and other such elements of physical communication are stressed.
- b. Dialogue: dialogical and participatory communication is preferred to monologues. Every one is encouraged to participate in the different aspects of worship.
- c. There is an emphasis on symbolic and metaphorical communications as they are more eloquent representations of religious experiences and insights.

Receiver: Both God and God's people are the receivers of the worship experience. God receives the prayers and praises of his people. The church enjoys communion with God. The church is a beneficiary of the worship experience in terms of the transformation that God brings upon it.

⁸⁷ Michel Quoist has this to say about prayer: "To begin with, it's talking to God who is in our lives and the lives of our brothers. A young person may say: 'I talk to him, but he never answers.' I answer: that's wrong. He's the one who talks to you first (through the prophets and his Son). Then there's his Gospel. God speaks to you through the mouths of men. Answer him. It's only polite'." See *With Open Heart*, 104.

Worship will be an artistic and communicative experience if those who plan People's Eucharist are aware of these aspects of worship.

4.5.3. Worship and empowerment

A very important lesson from people's theatre concerns the need to promote the active participation of the whole group of people present without distinction between the performers and the audience. Brecht, Boal, Sircar, and others have shown that the active participation of the audience is essential if theatre is going to bring about social transformation.⁸⁸ One may pay special attention to ideas from Boal's dramaturgy here. Boal's theatre is interactive theatre that functions by means of the active involvement of the audience whom he prefers to call "spect-actors." In the context of the People's Eucharist it means, of course, giving the laity greater participation (the implications of which in the context of the worship were discussed above). In the spirit of Boal, it must be assumed that every member of the worshipping community is capable of taking an active part in the Eucharist. It must be assumed that the Spirit of God will enable every participant to enter into communion with God and to interact with others. Participation is essential for spiritual growth and liberation.

There are several ways in which Boal's theatre method may be profitably employed to mobilise the congregation. First of all, it can be used to conscientise the congregation. For example, Boal's techniques of the Image Theatre and Forum Theatre can enable the congregation to come to grips with the oppressive situations in the society, to experience vicariously the intensity and the complexity of the suffering of their victims, and to confer about effective means to counter them. The imaging has at least three phases: first, the portrayal of the oppression based on the reported situation (the "Real Image" according to Boal's terminology); second, the imagining and imaging of the situation of liberation (the "Ideal Image") based on Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God; and, third, the depiction of the transition from one situation to another. These techniques help People's Eucharist to be a means of educating and enlightening the congregation.

Secondly, Boal's theatre technique may be effectively used to empower the victims of oppression. Its aim is to empower the oppressed to take charge of their situation and to resist

⁸⁸ Badal Sircar, *The Changing Language of the Theatre* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1982) 20.

and overcome the oppressor.⁸⁹ Boal believes that his theatre is a 'rehearsal for revolution' to equip the oppressed to analyse the situations of social injustice in which they are embroiled and to counter them at the imaginative level so that later on they might be able to deal with them at the practical level. People who have attended Boal workshops have found it as an emboldening and empowering experience. Others have received insights of the oppressive nature of their situations for the first time. Yet others have found that it equipped them to involve meaningfully in the life of the community.⁹⁰ Using these techniques, People's Eucharist should enable the worshippers to identify and to deal with their oppressive situations. The period of worship will be an empowering experience for them.

Thirdly, Boal's dramaturgy may be employed to bring unity and cohesion to the worshipping assembly. Theatre generally promotes the group process, which is one of the strengths of the theatre. In the warmth of the group experience, the oppressed think and work in one spirit, and pool their artistic resources to resist the structures that militate against their liberation. Those who have participated in Boal workshops testify to their faith in the group and to their own newly acquired skill to work with others in a group.⁹¹ This attitude is most valuable in the church, where the sense of community must be fostered at all costs. The church is the body of Christ only when it exhibits a unity of spirit in its life and ministry. The group dynamics of the theatre process is a priceless input to the church's fellowship. Ngugi wa Thiong'o recounts the experience of producing a play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) with the total involvement of the local community in Kamiriithu, Kenya. He points out the transformation the process of playmaking brought about. He says,

The Kamiriithu practice was part of the process of demystifying knowledge and hence reality. People could see how the actors evolved from the time they could hardly move their legs or say their lines to a time when they could talk and move about the stage as if they were born talking those lines or moving on that stage..... Perfection was thus shown to be a process, a historical social process, but it was admired no less. On the contrary they identified with that perfection even more because it was a product of themselves and their collective compilation. It was a heightening of themselves as a community.⁹²

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ See Tom Magill, "Applying Boal in Belfast: Two Contrasting Case Studies," in "Working Without Boal," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 3/1 (1995): 51-65. Magill reports how, a group of underprivileged young people in Belfast found their experience of Theatre for Oppressed workshops a transforming, empowering experience. One said, "I have become more assertive, very active and outgoing" (*ibid.*, 59).

⁹¹ One said, "... I have learned not to be afraid or have any reservations and that team-work is essential and that with a strong team anything can be done" (*ibid.*).

⁹² See wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, 57.

The Kamiriithu experience is an illustration of the impact of the people's theatre experience which mobilised a group of ordinary villagers to be enlightened about their plight, to apply their mind to the complex problems that affect their lives and to find strength to counter the situation in their unity. People's Eucharist also becomes a scene of empowerment not just with human wisdom but also with the vision of the Kingdom of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

4.5.4. Focus on specific issues

Lack of a clear purpose is the defect of many a worship session. The assembly at worship often seems to detach itself from the cares and problems of the world. While the clergy lead a liturgy with its own timeless language, the people who suffer and their problems are left in the lurch. But People's Eucharist taking its cue from the People's Theatre brings concrete issues into focus.⁹³ This will be reflected in the selection of Bible readings, the intercessions, and other prayers that focus on one or more issues that need to be of concern to the worshipping community.

4.5.5. Communicational effectiveness

The main feature of the People's Eucharist is its narrative and dramatic character and this strengthens its quality as a means of effective communication. People's Eucharist is in tune with several principles of communication.

Communication experts agree that communications that bring about change involve the emotions.⁹⁴ The main forte of People's Eucharist is oral and/or dramatised storytelling. Stories always appeal to the heart; they touch the emotions. Therefore stories can enable the worshippers to involve more deeply in the liturgical action. They can help them to get to grips with the issues at hand. Anderson and Foley say, "Stories make claim on our minds and hearts before we know why or how."⁹⁵ Narrative theology makes use of this quality of

⁹³ For example, the KSSP street theatre in Kerala focuses on current problems that affect common people and call for immediate solution. See above, Ch.3, sec. 3.4.3.1

⁹⁴ Pierre Babin says,

The quality of our communication depends primarily not on learning techniques, but on converting the heart.... Reason, analysis, strictness, and marketing are necessary, but only if they depend on the heart. The greatest catastrophe that can happen to communication today is for it to be governed by reason alone.

See P. Babin (with Mercedes Iannone), *The New Era in Religious Communication*, trans. David Smith (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991) 104.

⁹⁵ Anderson and Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, 4.

the stories. According to Bausch, "Systematic theology engages the intellect; storytelling engages the heart, and indeed the whole person."⁹⁶ The impact of stories is more powerful when they are dramatised since dramatic presentation engages more than one sense.

Good communications are *receiver-oriented*; they are dialogical and participatory in character.⁹⁷ Accordingly People's Eucharist is laity-centred and participatory. The use of storytelling and interactive theatre in the People's Eucharist ensure dialogical and participatory communication. This is emphasised in the "Theatre of the Oppressed" (Boal) formats where the audience plays an active role in the capacity of "spect-actors."

Building trust is a prerequisite for effective communication. The provision for lay participation and involvement in the Eucharist is a means of building trust within the worshipping community. Mutual trust is indispensable for People's Eucharist. Mutual sharing of stories, experiences, and insights leads to greater trust, fellowship and solidarity among the worshippers. The atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance will set the stage for reconciliation and deeper communion within the Body of Christ.

Effective communication takes time and involves several stages. Communication is a process, not a one-time event. After each celebration of the People's Eucharist the intensity of mutual interaction and fellowship in the worshipping community is bound to increase. This is engendered by the wide spectrum of interactions at the social, intellectual, and emotional levels among those who take part in the People's Eucharist. This in turn results in mutual support and co-operation, which are essential for the church's mission.

Implicit communications are often more crucial than explicit communications. Non-verbal communications are more powerful than verbal communications. Storytelling using drama, mime, dance and other arts can make liturgical communication stronger.⁹⁸ One of the merits of the use of drama is that it involves non-verbal and implicit communications, which are

⁹⁶ William Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, 27.

⁹⁷ This is crucial because meaning is the creation of the "receiver." Jan Servaes argues that in modern development communications "the focus moves from a *communicator*- to a more *receiver-centric* orientation, with the resultant emphasis on meaning sought and ascribed rather than information transmitted." 'Introduction' to *Participatory Communication for Social Change*, eds., Jan Servaes, Thomas L. Jacobson, and Shirley A. White, Communication and Human Values series (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, and London: Sage Books, 1996) 16.

⁹⁸ Sample, who emphasises the importance of visual image and rhythm for the North American "post-literal" age, observes: "The worship of the future will involve congregational dance. It can be learned and can be a significant way to glorify God." See Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World* (Nashville, MN: Abingdon Press, 1998) 74. Although dance, drama, mime and other

powerful vehicles of life-changing messages. In dramatic dialogue, the sub-text is expressed in performance and conveyed through physical posture, stage movements, gestures, facial expressions, etc., making theatre a more powerful means of communication than discourses or monologues.

Good communications demand different approaches to different audiences. It is exemplified in the ministry of Jesus and his dealing with people. Jesus used a wide variety of means to communicate his message.⁹⁹ People's Eucharist provides for a rich assortment of communication tools. Every type of narrative has its place and scope in this liturgical format. Since the laity are given a high degree of participation, the limitless communication skills at their disposal can be put to use here. Such variety can appeal to different groups of people and situations.

People's Eucharist is based on sound principles of communications. It becomes therefore a vehicle of the whole Gospel addressed to the whole person. Its participatory communications can enable even the smallest member of the congregation to exercise his or her God-given talents to "lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord ... in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116:13-14).

Theatre can bring new life again into the church's communications. The mediaeval church had used the dramatic element to colour its worship, to engage the attention of the worshipping congregation and to promote its whole-hearted participation. The theatre had also served as a forearm of the church's catechetical and missionary efforts. But for various reasons the Western church and the theatre had to part ways while the Eastern traditions have continued to make use of the dramatic in its worship albeit in a stereotyped fashion. The disenchantment of the church with the theatre must have contributed to the degeneration of

performing arts are quite akin to the background of the church in India, today's church has to retrace its steps along a puritanical route and unlearn its prejudices in order to re-assimilate these arts.

⁹⁹ The Fourth Gospel abounds in examples about Jesus' communications. Communicators can learn much from the variety of ways that Jesus employs to communicate about himself and about his mission. Even a casual reading of the Gospel yields much. In the first chapter of John, two would-be disciples learn about Jesus by spending a night with him (Jn. 1:35-42). In chapter two, Jesus reveals his glory in a miracle (2:1-11). In chapter three, he tells Nicodemus, "You must be born anew" (3:7) (Jesus does not seem to have repeated those words to anyone else.) There is an entirely different approach to the Samaritan woman who learns of Christ in a conversation about the quality of drinking water (4:1-26). In the fifth chapter, it is a controversy that stems from Jesus alleged violation of the Sabbath law that enables his followers to have a renewed vision of his status as the Son of God (5:17-47). In chapter six, the miracle of the Feeding of the Multitude leads to a misunderstanding, which Jesus attempts to correct by revealing himself as the "bread of life;" so on and so forth, Jesus uses a variety of means to communicate his message. His insight into the background, needs, and capabilities (or the lack of them) of his audience as well as the rich repertoire of communication skills at his command enabled Jesus to make his meaning so clearly and effectively.

the theatre on the one hand and the dreariness of much of the church's worship on the other. Now it is a time to recover the dramatic by taking the laity to the forefront of the church's worship and mission. The resources from the people's theatre can be profitably employed in the planning of an engaging, focused, participatory form of worship. That is the method of the People's Eucharist.

4.6. Recapture of the Didactic: Grounding in Ethical Practice

The didactic purpose of People's Eucharist is two-pronged: its first aim is to enable the worshipping community to discover its own bondages and to look for ways and means of its liberation; secondly, it aims at mobilising the local congregation to strive for the liberation of the society. To achieve these aims, People's Eucharist makes use of theatre that follows the Freireian methods of people-centred pedagogy.

One often notices two problems in the celebration of the Eucharist. The first one is the coldness on the part of the congregation that stems from the deficiency in congregational involvement. Many worshippers are resigned to their status as mere receivers of the worship experience. They attend the worship to hear the sermon preached and to receive the sacraments administered to them ("God's *frozen* people"!)¹⁰⁰ The second problem is the failure of the worshippers in applying the mysteries of faith to the life and situations outside the context of worship. Therefore there is the need for effective teaching to enable the people of God to be active participants at the place of worship and committed witnesses outside it.

4.6.1. The teaching ministry of the church and the Eucharist

The church's primary ministry is didactic and its strongest means is the Eucharist; the Eucharist is a charter and a covenant of discipleship. According to the Gospels, Jesus relied much on his disciples whom he had called "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach, and have authority to cast out the demons" (Mk. 3:14). In other words, the disciples were to be close companions of Jesus in his work for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Therefore Jesus spent most of his time training the disciples by word and example. The Gospel of Mark stresses Jesus' role as the teacher of the twelve.

¹⁰⁰ See the book of the same title by Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton: *God's Frozen People* (London and Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1964).

The word “discipleship” sums up the nature and purpose of Christian life.¹⁰¹ To be a Christian means to be a disciple, a perennial learner (cf. Mt. 11:29). Before his ascension to heaven the risen Christ gave his disciples the Great Commission “to make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:18-20). He wanted his disciples to teach others what they have learnt of Christ and to incorporate them into the fellowship (of the church). The curriculum was Jesus’ life and message. His life was one of total obedience and submission to the Father; on account of his obedience, he was given all authority in heaven and on earth (cf. Phil. 2:5-11). His message on the other hand concerned the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14-15 pars.). The disciples were assured of the constant companionship of the risen Christ from whom they could draw their wisdom and sustenance.

The Eucharist is the fellowship meal of this community of the disciples. For them it is not only a means of remembrance; it is equally an instrument of Christian mission. The Eucharist in this context has two dimensions: remembering (ἀναμνησις) and proclaiming (κηρυγμα). The Eucharist is a means of sustenance for the community that reminds them of Christ, the bread of life. It is at the same time is the means of the community’s proclamation of the Lord’s death until he comes again. Mt. 28:18-20 provides a succinct statement on the nature and mission of the church. The church is called to be a community of disciples who live in constant fellowship with the risen and victorious Lord. It is an open community with a mission to incorporate others into the fellowship. Its members live as disciples and make disciples of others. They live in community with one another, loving and serving one another. They teach and proclaim the message of the Kingdom, its values, its justice, and its proximity. They communicate the message of its fellowship by exemplifying that fellowship in their common life. They invite everyone to become members of the fellowship that they enjoy with Christ and with one another.

4.6.2. Lessons from Paulo Freire

The aim of the People's Theatre is to conscientise, to create awareness in the community about its own problems as well as of the problems of others. It encourages active learning. It follows the Freireian, learner-centred pedagogy, or critical education. Freire starts the learning process from the learner’s descriptions of his or her concrete experiences in daily life.¹⁰² It is a dialogical education, in which the teacher-student dichotomy is resolved, as both engage together in the learning process by means of dialogue. Similarly, the People’s

¹⁰¹ Eduard Schweizer says, “Only the disciple can know who Jesus really is.” See *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1960) 21.

¹⁰² Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, 106.

Eucharist accomplishes the edification of the worshipping community through a people-centred learning process. By asking questions ('problem-posing'), and by engaging in a rhythm of 'action-reflection-action,' new insights for growth and progress are appropriated.

People's Eucharist emulates the People's Theatre that takes birth from the pressing needs, problems, and issues in the life of the people and builds self-awareness through dialogue. Similarly People's Eucharist will encourage active learning by helping the worshippers to raise questions and problems and issues from their daily life and experience in their homes and places of work. They will be enabled to find answers for their problems by mutual sharing of insights through ongoing dialogue. Reading of the Scriptures at worship can lead to a highly illuminating experience when Freire's method is applied to it. Freire said, "Reading is rewriting what we are reading. Reading is to rediscover the connections between the text and the context of the text, and also how to connect the text/context with my context, the context of the reader."¹⁰³ Just like the people in Solentiname who came up with great insights as they brought the Word of God to bear upon their life situations, ordinary worshippers may discover the treasures of the Bible for themselves.¹⁰⁴ Such insights at the place of worship will lead to new skills and strategies for action in the arena of the church's social and secular witness. This is the fruit of interactions with one another and with the realities of the society. As Freire says, "Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality* does not take place in ivory-tower isolation, but only in communication."¹⁰⁵

Ira Shor, reflecting on Freire's theory says, "If teachers or students exercised the power to remake knowledge in the classroom, then they would be asserting their power to remake society."¹⁰⁶ Worship can enable the participants to discover new implications for the ideas of freedom, love, justice and peace that are the values of the Kingdom of God. Worship can mobilise the church and its resources to play their part in the transformation in the society.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁴ Above, sec. 4.4.2.1.

¹⁰⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ See Freire and Shor, *op. cit.*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ But Freire is only too well aware of the limitations of educational practice without political action. He says,

Liberating education can change our understanding of reality. But this is not the same thing as changing reality itself. No. Only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom. The structures of society, like the capitalist mode of production, have to be changed for society to be transformed" (*ibid.*, 175).

4.6.3. The ethical challenge of the Eucharist

People's Eucharist encourages the worshipper to play an active role in worship and to discover for himself or herself the implications of the Eucharist for his or her personal life and for the life of the society. It challenges the worshipper to take up his or her ethical task seriously. In the words of Wainwright, the church must aim at an "ethically responsible Eucharist," that expresses the solemn realisation that "all our life in this world is meant to be a grateful response to God's gifts in creation and redemption."¹⁰⁸ According to Wainwright, the Eucharist, which symbolises the justice of God, challenges its participants to fellowship and the just sharing of the bounties of this world. He says,

Since the eucharist is representative of all meals, and since all food and drink is representative of the totality of human life, the sacrament should be so celebrated that it shows the kingdom of God to be food and drink, *only upon condition that* their use embodies justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁹

Wainwright emphasises the need of the congregations to bridge the gap between the worship and the day to day witness of the church in terms of sound ethical practice. He advises the church to approach the Eucharist with six attitudes: of anguish, reflecting the pain of the society; of confidence or faith in the power of the Lord to deliver; of repentance, voicing our share in the culpability of the society; of resolve to be changed; of intercession for all; and of thanksgiving for all.¹¹⁰

People's Eucharist is an important medium for teaching worshippers that their faith and worship has implications for the whole world, especially for their own daily life and work in the society. Active engagement with social and ethical problems and issues and mutual dialogue among the learners will free the congregations from the domesticating ways of traditional religious education. It will enable the worshippers to bridge the gap between the world of the Scriptures and their day to day world and to apply the Christian ethic to daily life earnestly and faithfully.

¹⁰⁸ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Worship with One Accord: Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace* (New York and Oxford: O.U.P., 1997) 207.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 208-210.

4.7. Reaffirmation of Culture: Sharing Moral and Spiritual Concerns

People's Eucharist is Eucharist rooted and grounded in the local soil. It speaks the language of the people because it is ordinary men and women who are engaged in its celebration.

People's Eucharist is born out of a genuine dialogue between the church's received tradition of the Eucharist and the life and culture of the local people. People's Eucharist promotes a healthy, positive, and dialogical attitude towards the local culture.¹¹¹ This happens mainly on account of the use of the arts in worship, which draws the best and the most attractive aspects of the local culture to be used and dedicated to God in worship. Inculturation takes place in a natural and spontaneous manner when the church and the local culture engage in mutual interaction in the face of common moral and spiritual concerns.

4.7.1. Why liturgical inculturation?

Inculturation is a dialogical process. It involves giving and receiving. Inculturation is engendered when a person or group belonging to a religion or culture interacts with another person or group belonging to a different religion or culture with the purpose of establishing a healthy mutual relationship – a relationship in which both parties are enriched. Inculturation is therefore *intercultural* in which both the interacting cultures are subject to change. But it is different from 'going native' when one party abandons one's own culture and adopts the culture of another. It is not one culture absorbing another. Arbuckle links inculturation to incarnation and evangelisation. He points out that in this sense "evangelisation, as a process of reliving the incarnation itself, demands the *insertion* of the Gospel within the very heart of culture."¹¹²

In the context of worship, it may be asserted that an authentic liturgy is the fruit of a process of inculturation. Schineller says, "Liturgy is indeed the public prayer of the people, of the local community, and it must be an expression of their faith and their struggle for a life of justice, their living the Kingdom vision."¹¹³ Therefore it will summarise the prayers of the

¹¹¹ Culture, according to Geertz, is "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and attitudes towards, life." See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 89, quoted by Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990) 28.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 18. Barbara Liotskos defines inculturation as "a process of letting the Gospel contained in the Scripture and the Tradition, be incarnate in our own context. It involves finding a way to proclaim the Gospel in our own twentieth (and twenty-first) century 'language.'" See "The Future of the Liturgy: Some Thoughts and Dreams," *Worship* 71 (1997): 43.

¹¹³ Peter E. Fink, ed. *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), s. v. "Inculturation of the Liturgy," by Peter Schineller.

people, voice their anxieties and articulate their aspirations. In other words, an authentic liturgy is the product of an authentic church which is in communion with the native culture.

4.7.2. Lessons from the New Testament

The Bible is a textbook of inculturation. For it tells us the story of a God who in his great mercy has revealed himself to human beings in such a manner as to enable them to learn from him of his majesty and of his salvation. God has not confined himself to any favourite pattern of revelation but has shown willingness to use different approaches to different peoples and nations; and he has not left any nation without a witness. In the fullness of time God has sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, in the likeness of human flesh to reveal his redemptive glory. Jesus on his part has commissioned his disciples to go to the ends of the earth in the power of the Holy Spirit to communicate the Good News of God's salvation. The best models for inculturation in the New Testament are found in Jesus Christ and in the apostle Paul.

4.7.2.1. *Christ and inculturation*

The perfect illustration of inculturation is seen in the incarnation.¹¹⁴ As Ukpong says, "Using elements of Jewish culture he [Jesus] sought to instil into the Law and Jewish religion a new vision based on the Good News that he preached."¹¹⁵ "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1: 14). The Son of God enters the world of sinful humans to seek and save the lost. By his interaction with the sinful, he is able to transform them. He himself is transformed by his encounter with the world; not that he learns anything new or acquires any human trait, but he undergoes change. The Word *became* flesh. The Son of God became the Crucified Messiah. Although he eats and drinks with the tax collectors and the sinners he does not become a tax collector or sinner himself. Though he lives among the Jews as a Jew, he transcends the narrow confines of Judaism to bring salvation to all.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ A. J. Chupungco says, "...The incarnation of the Son of God is the paradigm or the model of inculturation." See "Liturgical Inculturation and the Search for Unity," in *So We Believe, So We Pray* (Geneva: W.C.C., 1995) 57. See also David C. Scott's article, "Worship in an Indian Christian Ethos," *Bangalore Theological Forum* 18 (April-Sept. 1986): 75-84, discussed above in Ch. 2, sec. 2.4.2. (c).

¹¹⁵ Justin Ukpong, "Christology and Inculturation: A New Testament Perspective," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (London: SCM Press, 1994) 40.

¹¹⁶ Lumbala says, "...The Jewish Christ interests us only because, instead of making Jews of us all, he has transcended the concrete context of his incarnation to become the Alpha and Omega of all human history...." See F. K. Lumbala, "Africans Celebrate Jesus Christ," trans. Robert R. Barr, in *Paths of African Theology*, 79.

While he immerses himself in the sinful society, he does not lose his divinity or the virtues of his person. Immersing yet transcending, he saves humanity.

Christ is transcendent and immanent at the same time. Christ suffers, dies, rises again; he is given a name above all names. Christ's way of inculturation is dialogical; he is willing to give and to receive. He teaches his disciples also to be truly involved in the life of the world, and at the same time to transcend the world. In his high priestly prayer, he prays to the Father that he may guard the disciples who are in the world but not of the world (Jn. 17:14-16). The life of Christ is the finest illustration of inculturation. It means total immersion in another culture, and the willingness to receive the best in that culture; but at the same time combatting the evil in the other culture, transcending its weaknesses and enriching it in every respect. The church is challenged to follow Christ's way in its interaction with other religions and cultures and in its engagement with the problems of common people in God's world; this is what the People's Eucharist endeavours to bring about.

4.7.2.2. Paul and cultures

"Inculturation" characterises the life and ministry of Paul, 'the apostle to the Gentiles.' Paul in his apostolic ministry among the Jews and the Gentiles always shows his willingness to give and to receive. He says, "I have become all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:19-23). Writing to the Roman Church he tells them that he wishes to share with them "some spiritual gift" to strengthen them, or rather that he and they might "be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" both his and theirs (Rom. 1:11f.). In addressing the Jews, Paul interprets the Gospel of Jesus Christ from within the framework of Judaism. He bases his exposition of the salvation-history based on the Old Testament, on concepts like the covenant, circumcision, law, sacrifice, the person and work of the Messiah, and so on. When he addresses the Gentiles he makes use of their terminology and thought forms, like "Lord" or "conscience" or "knowledge." He freely borrows from other cultures words, concepts, thought forms, rhetorical styles and so on.

These two biblical examples of inculturation offer important lessons. Firstly, the liturgy of the church should evince the church's openness to interact with the other cultures with the mind of Christ. Secondly, discrimination should be exercised while borrowing cultural symbols and practices. Nothing may be borrowed or adapted simply because it is novel or exotic. Every culture and every human institution, including the church, stand in need of

redemption. Only Christ could take upon himself the sinful flesh of humanity and not become corrupted by it. There are problems specific to India, which is a mosaic of cultures. There are cultures of the oppressed and of the oppressors. Each culture and each cultural practice has its socio-economic and religious associations. The church cannot adopt a cultural element or practice without taking into account its associations with social, political, gender-based or any other form of hegemony. Some of these elements could be incongruous with the Kingdom values, and could prove to be disastrous for the common life and the mission of the church. Therefore there is the need to be judicious in dealing with alien cultural practices.

4.7.3. Objections to inculturation

It must be noted that even among the advocates of liturgical reform there are some who have serious reservations concerning the concept and the practice of inculturation. A case in point is Pope John Paul II's refusal to celebrate the Mass according to the Zairean Missal (*Missel Romain pour les dioceses du Zaire*) which was a much publicised show-piece of inculturation; it happened on his visit to Zaire (present Democratic Republic of Congo) in 1984.¹¹⁷ Later the Pope told a group of Zairean bishops that "a liturgy corresponding to the soul of Africa cannot be realised except as the result of a progressive maturation of faith."¹¹⁸ Many were disappointed at the conservatism of the Holy See and wondered if there were different standards to measure the spiritual maturity of each nation! But at the same time Vatican was right in indirectly suggesting that the said liturgy was not a direct product of the local church but rather a brain child of its liturgists. Truly a church's spirituality is the wellspring of its liturgy. An authentic liturgy is not manufactured at the theologian's desk but evolves at the height of a church's devotion to God and its mission to the world. Inculturation takes place at the cutting edge of a living church's mission. Nevertheless, the significance of the liturgist-theologian as catalyst and formulator of the whole process must not be belittled.

¹¹⁷ M. Kane, "African Liturgy and the Papal visit to Zaire," AFER 26 (1984) 246, cited by Victor R. Atta-Bafoe and Philip Tovey, "What Does Inculturation Mean?" in *Liturgical Inculturation in the Anglican Communion* (Bramcote, Nottings.: Grove Books, 1990) 37.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Although Vatican II sanctioned translation, adaptation and acculturation of the liturgy, it did not propose or sanction inculturation. Aylward Shorter says, "Nowhere in the constitution is it suggested that a Eucharistic prayer could be created locally and receive approval." See Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994) 193.

Again, Aidan Kavanagh has made some trenchant criticisms of inculturation.¹¹⁹ First of all, he accuses the elite of the First World of unnecessarily imposing liturgical inculturation upon the Third World. Secondly, he blames the proponents of inculturation for treating liturgical renewal as a political process, overlooking the cardinal element of faith involved in Christian worship. Thirdly, he views inculturation as an expression of middle class piety, which constantly looks for change. Fourthly, he charges the votaries of inculturation with undervaluing and side-tracking the church in the process of liturgical reform (“... to know neither the church nor the Christ is to have no idea of where or how far inculturation can go....”¹²⁰). Kavanagh feels that the arena of liturgical reform has been usurped by what he calls ‘consultants’ and ‘societies’ who have upstaged the active members of the church in the process; nevertheless, he does not believe that pastors and theologians have the necessary expertise in bringing about inculturation. He sounds the caution that “we would be well advised for the future not to confuse our own particular interests or agendas with the grace of inculturation”¹²¹

The background of Kavanagh’s vehement criticism is not clear; yet it seems to be ill advised. Possibly he is fighting some wrong tendency in the Western churches to treat inculturation as a pastime. But in the modern period the demand for inculturation did not originate in the West, as he seems to suggest, but in Africa and Asia. The criticism that the proponents of inculturation are overlooking the faith and the significance of the church cannot be generalised.

4.7.4. Two proponents of liturgical inculturation

Among the votaries of liturgical inculturation, two names deserve special attention on account of their different approaches. Both have made their contributions to the Roman Catholic liturgical movement on an international level as well as on regional levels. Anscar J. Chupungco (Philippines) is known for his seasoned and church-centred approach and D.S. Amalorpavadass (India) for his daring dialogical approach. A concise account of their ideas is given below as they represent two different styles of inculturation.

¹¹⁹ See “Liturgical Inculturation: Looking to the Future,” *Studia Liturgica* 20 (1990): 95-106.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 104.

¹²¹ Ibid., 105.

4.7.4.1. Anscar J. Chupungco

Anscar J. Chupungco's church-centred approach to inculturation is clearly set out in his article on "Liturgical Inculturation and the Search for Unity."¹²² In his earlier work, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*, Chupungco had defined inculturation of the liturgy as "the process by which a pre-Christian rite is endowed with Christian meaning."¹²³ He is in total agreement with the definition by Pope John Paul II that inculturation is "an intimate transformation of the authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the implantation of Christianity into different human cultures."¹²⁴ According to Chupungco, inculturation is the outcome of genuine appreciation of the positive features of other cultures and a process of "dialogue between liturgy and culture." This is the stage when cultural elements are borrowed and transformed so that they may become congruous with the liturgical tradition of the church. This method of inculturation will result in the "mutual enrichment" of the liturgy and the culture in question.¹²⁵

Chupungco affirms that inculturation can be carried out only in loyal and faithful relationship to the received liturgical tradition of the church. He is wary of enthusiasts who treat inculturation as a "socio-cultural activity" forgetting the fact that "the liturgy is the privileged moment when Christians meet God through Christ in the Holy Spirit."¹²⁶ Chupungco is convinced that the limits to inculturation are set by the liturgy itself. For, the liturgy is a sacred action, which is "by definition Christo-centric." It is celebrated in the presence of the gathered people of God, "the one, Catholic church."¹²⁷ Chupungco is opposed to the use of other texts in place of the Bible in worship; he also objects to the use of extraneous cultural elements in such a manner as to obscure the biblical symbolism in the liturgy. But he favours using culturally relevant symbolism that can shed light on biblical concepts.¹²⁸ He maintains that the process of inculturation should not lose sight of the twin accents of the liturgy on the church's current earthly mission and on its eschatological

¹²² In *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship*, eds Thomas E. Best and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC, 1995). 55-64. See also his books *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (New York, Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1982) and *Worship: Beyond Inculturation* (Washington, D.C: The Pastoral Press, 1994).

¹²³ Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*, 84.

¹²⁴ *Redemptoris missio*, 1990, no. 52, cited by Chupungco, "Liturgical Inculturation and the Search for Unity," 56.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

¹²⁶ Chupungco, *ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

vision.¹²⁹ According to Chupungco, inculturation is “basically the faithful translation into different but suitable cultural values, patterns and institutions of what the churches have received from the apostles. Hence, inculturation does not introduce practices that are totally alien from the gospel message.”¹³⁰

Chupungco insists that inculturation is “not pure creativity” and that “authentic inculturation does not create new liturgies.”¹³¹ Its limited prerogative is to translate the liturgy into a locally relevant format by discovering “dynamic equivalents” to the words, rituals, or symbols in the received liturgical tradition. Chupungco reminds those who are engaged in inculturation that the liturgy is a “sacred action” not to be tampered with frivolously. He points out that liturgical reformers can never afford to lose sight of the ‘irreducible minimum’ of the [traditional] Christian liturgy which is the church’s faith in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. He prescribes that current efforts of inculturation in different parts of the world should give pride of place to the “received tradition.”

While being overcautious, Chupungco unfortunately fails to recognise the cultural baggage that the church has inherited from its past as well as from various ecclesiastical centres. These cultural elements have now become part and parcel of the liturgical tradition. The phrase Chupungco repeatedly uses, namely, “received tradition” has to be taken with a pinch of salt. It is difficult to concede that the “received tradition” includes a “received” liturgy. From Chupungco’s argument it would appear that the Roman liturgy has no cultural associations at all! Chupungco’s approach is so [Roman] church-centred that it would appear that for him local cultures are only targets and tools of the church’s mission and that the church does not have much to learn or receive from them.

But at the same time those who attempt inculturation will do well to heed his warnings. Inculturation is not the unthinking imitation of local practices. Overzealous attempts to promote inculturation must not “kill” the spirit of the liturgy by constricting its kerygmatic core. Yet it is necessary to approach other cultures with an open mind, not only seeking self-expression but also showing willingness to listen and to learn; the practitioners of inculturation must endeavour to enrich the liturgy on the one hand and to benefit the local culture on the other. Inculturation will happen spontaneously if liturgists listen more to the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 61.

ordinary worshippers and take cues from their natural ways of adopting and adapting the best in the religious milieu of the church.

4.7.4.2. D.S. Amalorpavadass

In his article “Theological Reflections on Inculturation,”¹³² D.S. Amalorpavadass gives a theological analysis of the inculturation process. According to Amalorpavadass, inculturation is an imperative for the mission of the church.¹³³ He advocates a dialogical approach to inculturation.

Amalorpavadass analyses culture and finds it a complex reality. It is “*a way of life, modus vivendi, ethos or life-style of a people*” distinguished by a “*samskriti* or” value system.¹³⁴ A culture has its own outlook on life embodied in its religion, philosophy, and spirituality. It has its ‘symbols’ that communicate its worldview at personal, social and global levels: language and literature, customs and habits, social and economic structures, arts and crafts, religious practices, etc.¹³⁵

“Inculturation deals with the interaction between religion and culture.”¹³⁶ It is an in-depth process of “interacting and integrating with the totality of a culture” and its value system during which both Christian culture and the other culture undergo change and transformation. This has happened all along in the history of the church.¹³⁷

Amalorpavadass defines three approaches to inculturation: theological approach (that is, culture from the point of view of Christianity), anthropological approach (Christianity from the point of view of culture), and ‘spirituality approach,’ the last one being an integration of the first two approaches.

¹³² D.S. Amalorpavadass, “Theological Reflections on Inculturation,” Part I, *Studia Liturgica* 20/1 (1990): 36-54; Part II, *Studia Liturgica* 20/2 (1990): 116-136. His other writings on the topic include: *Towards Indigenisation in the Liturgy* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1972) and *Gospel and Culture: Evangelisation and Inculturation* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1978); see also D.S. Amalorpavadass (ed.) *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981).

¹³³ He says, “If evangelisation consists in being led by the Spirit and communicating the good news of the Kingdom and witnessing to Jesus Christ through the medium of a people’s human-social, cultural-religious realities, then there can be no true and efficient evangelisation without inculturation.” See “Theological Inculturation...”, 40.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

a. Theological approach:

Here he deals with culture as part of God's creation. God created everything good so that the "creation is a visible sign and expression, a permanent and effective communication of God."¹³⁸ But sin entered the created universe and as a result everything in creation is "tainted by sin and evil;" as a result "everything human and secular is ambivalent, goodness and evil co-exist everywhere."¹³⁹ It is to save, reconcile and liberate the fallen universe that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (Jn. 1:14). God's way of salvation is the way of incarnation, which involves entering into the fallen universe in order to save, liberate and transform it. The church is challenged to adopt this mystery of incarnation as the model of inculturation.¹⁴⁰ Incarnation is a "transforming influence"; it has set "in motion a dynamic process, the interaction of transformation in each person, human community; and the entire cosmos."¹⁴¹ In the incarnation God in Christ brings into being a new creation by assuming the nature of sinful flesh and by subjecting it to death and resurrection. This is the way for the church to become universally relevant.¹⁴² Amalorpavadass reminds innovators that "persons and things cannot be integrated into the Church unless they are brought into the touchstone of Christ and his paschal mystery."¹⁴³ The purpose of inculturation is to help the church grow into a universal fellowship being enriched by the "traditions, moral goods, and spiritual values of the various peoples and their cultures."¹⁴⁴

b. Anthropological approach:

This is the understanding that inculturation of faith and practice is inevitable in India's religious environment. Amalorpavadass finds in Hinduism a genuine yearning for and approval of what is spiritual, eternal, truthful, authentic and life-changing. The Vedic prayer *asato ma satgamaya* ("lead me from unreal to the real") sums up the spiritual orientation of philosophical Hinduism. Inculturation of Christian faith and practice is inevitable in India's religious environment. God who has revealed himself uniquely in the person of his Son Jesus Christ has not limited his revelation to Israel or to the church and has not left other

¹³⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴² Ibid., 53: "Catholicity cannot be realised unless inculturation takes place in each socio-cultural reality."

¹⁴³ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 52.

religions and cultures without a witness. Asian cultures in general have inextricable religious associations. They have a lot to contribute to other cultures and religions. They emphasise “wholeness and harmony “ rather than categorisation, religious experience rather than abstract reasoning. They value “interiority and depth,” and “stillness and silence.”¹⁴⁵.

c. Spirituality approach:

The term ‘spirituality approach’ refers to an integral view that has already found the integration of the Gospel and the local culture at their “dynamic core” of spirituality.¹⁴⁶ He cites what he calls “Indian Christian Spirituality Experience” as an example.

Amalorpavadass adopts this integrated approach. He finds that inculturation is a dynamic process of reorientation and restructuring that touches practically every aspect of the church’s life and mission from the conscientisation of the local church to the use of the arts and the acts of charity.

Summing up his essay, Amalorpavadass focuses attention on the Indian approach to inculturation that he has discovered: that is, from the vantage point of spiritual unity with Indian religions. It evolves from constant dialogue with people of other faiths at the level of spiritual experience and social intercourse. This will result in an “inner total experience as the two traditions merge into one at the innermost core of self and on the ground of the mystery of being.”¹⁴⁷ According to Amalorpavadass, some of the means to forward the cause of inculturation in India are the following: critical reflection, dialogue, sharing and communication of experiences, interaction within the Christian community and outside with “the wider human community of common culture and religious tradition,” making use of all available media including the arts for this purpose, and actions in solidarity with people at the grass-roots level.

Amalorpavadass is to be lauded for challenging the church to open itself up to the religions and cultures of Asia and for encouraging sharing and dialogue among the religions. The major strengths of his approach are the deference to the positive qualities of India’s religious environment and the willingness to enter into dialogue with that environment with a view to mutual enrichment.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹⁴⁶ According to Amalorpavadass “this is the deepest form of inculturation in a two-way approach merging at the core level in the heart of each other in peak experience.” Ibid., 129.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 133.

But there are two basic difficulties in this kind of dialogue: the first difficulty is philosophical and theological; it concerns the radical breach that exists arguably between natural theology and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It can set restrictions in the way of inculturation. The second difficulty concerns the historical blindness and apathy of Asian religions, to injustices and to the oppression of the poor, of women and of children in Asia. Adaptations of religious symbols and practices that have historical connections with oppression and discriminations based on caste, class, and creed, could undermine the liberating message of the gospel. Only liberating inculturation will be congruous with the good news of the Kingdom. Liturgical innovators need to look at the religious environment and cultural practices from the point of view of the poor and from the “under side of history.” But People's Eucharist is a form of liturgy that gives priority to the ordinary people, to the poor and the oppressed and is concerned about their liberation.

4.7.5. Inculturation of liturgical language: focus on the CSI liturgy

The cultural adaptation of the liturgical language is a conspicuous sign of inculturation and therefore it deserves special attention at this juncture. How far does the language of the CSI liturgy manifest the marks of cultural adaptation? Does it convey the meaning of the Eucharist by means of culturally appropriate modes of communication?

4.7.5.1. *Importance of liturgical language: verbal and non-verbal*

Language is an important element in worship. Some believe that liturgical language needs to be poetic¹⁴⁸ -- short and sweet, imaginative and emotive; others would prefer it to be couched in contemporary, lucid, and matter-of-fact phrases. Some feel that the mystifying use of classic languages like Latin, or Syriac, Sanskrit, or of glossolalia (as the case may be) is absolutely essential for Christian worship. Whatever it is, languages do play a key role in worship as a means of ritual expression of faith and of mutual communion among worshippers.

Liturgical language, of course, is not only verbal: it is a composite of the verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal communication by means of facial expressions, postures, movements, actions, light, sound, silence, colour, artefacts, etc. play an equally significant role in worship.

¹⁴⁸ R. Kevin Seasoltz, review of *Chapters into Verse: Poetry Inspired by the Bible*, edited by Robert Atwan and Laurence Wieder, in *Worship* 68 (1994): 377.

4.7.5.2. *Role of liturgical texts: originals and translations*

Liturgical texts are formal vehicles of liturgical language. The so-called “liturgical” denominations, like the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, value them highly and guard them jealously. Their liturgical materials are traditional texts handed down from the past in original languages, like Syriac, and in their translations. These afford little scope for inculturation except by way of translation when “dynamic equivalents” of words and concepts might be adopted from the local language and culture.

Free churches, on the other hand, like the Pentecostals and the Baptists, prefer to use minimum textual resources at worship. They may not use any liturgical text at all, except for portions of Scripture. But in such cases, there is considerable scope for inculturation by way of the composition of original prayers and the development of contemporary and culturally relevant forms of worship.

In Kerala, the liturgies of major denominations like the Orthodox, Mar Thoma, and the CSI are clearly at variance with the language used by the general population; the major reason is their use of bad translations of liturgies handed down to them from other languages. The Eastern churches often use awkward translations of Syriac liturgies while CSI uses poor translations of English prayers. But two out of the four Roman Catholic rites (namely, the Latin and the Syro-Malabar rites) use contemporary language in their worship, which happens to be simple, plain language, devoid of slang on the one hand and grandiloquence on the other. As for the CSI, *The Book of Common Worship* was originally prepared in English by the Synod Liturgy Committee and subsequently translated into the major languages of the CSI, namely, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. The Malayalam translation of the CSI liturgy leaves much to be desired. One reason for its inferior quality is the fact that many of its prayers were copied from the archaic translation of the Book of Common Prayer Anglican Prayer Book. This was done possibly to enable the ex-Anglicans to accept the new liturgy more easily, but in the process, the church squandered the chance to attempt a fresh translation of the prayers.

Translation is always to some extent inculturation but poor translations weaken the scope for inter-cultural communication. Arguably at the time of the formation of the CSI there was the need for preparing the orders of worship in English, which was (and still is) the common language. But now it may be necessary to reverse the process, as Bishop Brown, one of the architects of the CSI liturgy, visualises. He observed on one occasion: “I think the

Malayalees or Tamils ought to write a new liturgy in their own language, using all its figures of speech and then translate it into English.”¹⁴⁹ Regional and culturally specific liturgical initiatives are required for the development of authentic liturgies that show the marks of true inculturation in liturgical language. At present this is in evidence only in the case of church music where each region in South India can boast of its wealth of Christian lyrical tradition.

4.7.6. People's Eucharist promotes inculturation

In the light of the above discussion it is possible to sum up ideas about the nature and process of inculturation in the following manner:

1. *Inculturation involves a critical interaction between the church's culture and local cultures for the mutual enrichment of both.* People's Eucharist can gather in the stories and the wisdom and artistic crafts of the local communities, regardless of their religious and ideological affinities.
2. *Worship is an arena where dialogue and sharing of spiritual insights between the local congregation and local cultures can take place.*
3. *The most spontaneous and natural form of inculturation happens when the church engages with local cultures to combat unjust, oppressive dehumanising situations, structures, and attitudes in the society.*
4. *Inculturation of the liturgy involves the expression of faith by means of symbols and rituals that are available in the cultural environment of the people.* It requires an informed understanding of signs, symbols, rituals, myths, and other modes of social communication that are germane to the native culture. Ritual is symbolic in nature. They are rooted in mythology, the stuff culture is made of.¹⁵⁰ To reject the symbol

¹⁴⁹ Personal letter of Bishop Leslie Brown to the researcher dated 25th May 1997; quoted earlier in Chapter 2, sec. 2.2.2.1, footnote 36.

¹⁵⁰ Lumbala says, “Why are ritual and worship the most appropriate expression of our experience of God? Represented in symbols, the experience of God fascinates us, attracts us, and yet always withdraws. Simultaneously veiling and revealing, symbols summon us to move beyond what is visible. Hence the importance of liturgy in any church, especially in a church intent on a mission of inculturation.” See “Africans Celebrate Jesus Christ,” in *Paths of African Theology*, 78.

means to repudiate the culture of the people.¹⁵¹ When the Gospel is presented with reference to the genius of the culture, it touches the genuine spirit of the people.

The People's Eucharist will be a model of inculturation in many ways. It encourages lay initiative and leadership in worship. It promotes dialogue between the congregation and the local movements and secular leadership outside the church. It uses local arts, crafts, and literature. It patronises music, drama, dance and other forms of performing arts. It promotes genuine involvement in the issues and problems of the suffering people around the world. By helping people to share the social, moral, and spiritual concerns of millions of ordinary people, and by making human needs matters of the church's prayer and targets of its missionary enterprise, this liturgical format will establish its relevance and usefulness in the church's life. In this way People's Eucharist will promote the process of inculturation of worship. It will bring the liturgy to the level of the life and struggles of common people.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter analyses the concept and method that underlies the people's Eucharist. People's Eucharist interweaves the story of God's salvation with the stories of people. Some of these are stories of victory over bondage and oppression; they are testimonies shared by people who have experienced God's salvation and liberation in their lives. There are other stories of people who are still suffering from sin, sickness, exploitation, and so on. Some stories concern people living in other lands and in strange situations. But they are all human stories and they are all relevant because those who suffer will find meaning and purpose for their lives when these stories are juxtaposed with the story of Christ's suffering and victory over suffering. The presentation or enactment of these stories will inspire people to have courage and hope to fight evil and oppressive situations and achieve victory over them.

People's Eucharist is a lay enterprise. In this worship the Eucharist is returned to ordinary men, women, and children; it is celebrated together by the clergy and the laity, by people belonging to various age and social groups. The purpose is to enable one and all to be partakers in the liberation and transformation that God is bringing upon the world through Christ and his Spirit. In this liberation, the local congregation or the worshipping community has a crucial role to play. The People's Eucharist is a learning process.

¹⁵¹ Arbuckle says (*Earthing the Gospel*, 28): "A symbol is an reality that by its very dynamism and power leads to (i.e. makes one to think about, imagine, get into contact with, or reach out to) another deeper (and often mysterious) reality through a sharing in the dynamism that the symbol itself offers (and not by merely verbal or additional explanations)."

Worshippers imbibe new spiritual insights in the true spirit of the disciples of Christ, who learned the ways of the Kingdom through the stories that Christ told them and enacted for them. These stories are shared with the local communities in a spirit of humility, love and mutual concern. The People's Eucharist is based on the understanding that it is by meeting around the one table, and by teaching and by empowering one another that the bands of disciples of Christ today will, in the power of the Risen Lord, bring reconciliation, liberation, and transformation to a broken world.

Chapter Five

THE SHAPE OF THE PEOPLE'S EUCHARIST

When the priest raises the host and says, "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith," you reply what you sense within: 'Christ has died. Christ is risen.' This is the Eucharist: proclamation of the Lord's death, proclamation of his eternal life, optimism of men and women who know that they are following, even amid the darkness and confusion of our history, the bright light of Christ, eternal life.

-- Oscar Romero (1979)¹

5.1. Introduction

The last two chapters of this dissertation deal with the pattern and practice of People's Eucharist. The present chapter explains the essential features of the People's Eucharist with the help of model liturgies.² People's Eucharist is a people-centred liturgy that emphasises the liberative aspect of God's act of saving the world in Christ, an act that becomes operative in human lives through the working of the Holy Spirit. It depicts the Eucharist as a narrative of God's salvation, in which the church has the God-given role of a participant. People's Eucharist recognises the spiritual gifts and priestly prerogatives of the people of God. It stresses the dramatic dimension of the liturgy, which has a significant role in the recounting the salvation story. The use of storytelling and theatre not only serves to enlighten the church, but also breaks the ice in interfaith and intercultural dialogues. This chapter deals with the shape of the People's Eucharist as a medium of people-centred worship and liberative mission.

¹ Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love* (Farmington, PA: The Plough, 1998) 137.

² "Guidelines for introducing People's Eucharist in the CSI dioceses of Kerala" are given in Appendix C.

5.2. The Phenomenon of People's Eucharist

People's Eucharist is a scheme for a larger celebration of the Eucharist that treats the traditional liturgy, in this case, the CSI liturgy, as a guideline for a full-fledged liturgical action. The traditional eucharistic liturgy may be viewed as a concentrated or distilled form of the church's worship. Being a repository of the church's faith, it sets down in terse theological jargon and symbolic terms the quintessence of the church's faith that has been handed down from the past. Its salient features are the economy of words and imaginative condensation of ideas. It is a rich mine of spiritual resources for the Christian life. The traditional liturgy may be compared to an artist's colour pigments, which have to be diluted with a solvent before use. It is like a poem or a biblical passage that has been mulled over, meditated upon and expatiated if one should arrive at its meaning and be captivated by it. But in the People's Eucharist, the condensed traditional ritual is broken down, simplified and interpreted, elaborated and enriched so that ordinary men and women of the church may lay claim to their liturgical heritage. It is they who will make its meaning and implications clear. It is they who will enrich the liturgy by associating it with the stories of their lives. In the People's Eucharist the traditional liturgy spreads its wings. People's Eucharist is liturgy in its full bloom.

It is necessary at this juncture to recapitulate the basic concepts of People's Eucharist without excessive repetition of the ideas discussed earlier.

5.2.1. Celebration of redemption

People's Eucharist is a celebration of the new life that God gives to human beings in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. It is a celebration of God's victory and the denouncement of all evil, injustice and oppression. Therefore it is an effective weapon against the powers of darkness that endeavour to enslave the human mind and to overshadow God's acts of grace in the world. The church has the great task of proclaiming this good news in all spheres of human life and activity where it has gone unrecognised and unacknowledged.

5.2.2. Response to reconciliation

The Eucharist, which is at one and the same time a local event and a cosmic phenomenon, bridges the gap between time and eternity and symbolises the reconciliation of the opposites. It is a symbol of reconciliation between the holy God and sinful humanity, a reconciliation to

be reflected within the estranged and warring human community. It becomes possible because God takes the initiative in human salvation and offers reconciliation and communion (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:19-22); Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14). The gospel is a call to “be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). One may experience reconciliation in personal life by responding to the divine initiative in repentance, faith and obedience. The Eucharist enables the worshipper to enter into personal communion with the suffering and victorious Christ and, through Christ, into fellowship with those who suffer in this world so that despair may be replaced by hope and loss by victory.

People's Eucharist reminds the church that communion with Christ and reconciliation with fellow-beings are not quixotic ideals but spiritual realities that have far-reaching implications in practical life. When people give heed to the message of the gospel, rivalries are resolved. Social distances are overcome. Economic disparities are levelled. The liturgy reflects the divine initiative and gives room for making the human response in a positive and practical manner. It challenges people to respond to the call to be reconciled to God on the one hand, and to be reconciled with their neighbours on the other. It symbolises both components of the covenant: the divine action that has already taken place in Christ and the human response to Christ that every person is privileged to make in total freedom. Some liturgies do not provide adequate scope for the worshippers to respond to God's redemptive action. In some traditions even the Offertory, which is a token of personal response and dedication to God, is a perfunctory ritual. But People's Eucharist provides for ritual expressions of thanksgiving, reconciliation, and personal commitment in one's relations with God and fellow-beings.

5.2.3. Recognition of the variety of gifts in the church

An important objective of the People's Eucharist is to enable the whole congregation to participate actively and wholeheartedly in the Eucharist, in which the worshippers are confronted with the claims of Christ and his message of the Kingdom of God; they are challenged to commit themselves to follow the way of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Participation in the Eucharist is intended to bring changes in the life and attitudes of the individual believers and of the church as a whole.

Lay persons play an important role in the planning and celebration of the People's Eucharist on a par with the clergy who are the theologically trained and ordained members of the church. People's Eucharist recognises the spiritual gifts of the laity (cf. 1 Cor. 12-14); there is an emphasis on the variety of gifts entrusted to different members of the church (cf. Rom.

12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 4:11-16) and on the need for unity. It has a vision of the whole church entrusted with the priestly task of reconciling the world to God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:4-10).

People's Eucharist emphasises the priestly role and function of the whole church in the liturgical action, which are fulfilled through Christ, with Christ, in Christ the High Priest. In Christ the church becomes a "holy" people set apart to serve God (cf. Heb. 7:26). The priestly prerogatives of the people of God include offering to God the sacrifice of praise for the redemption of the world (cf. Heb. 13:15), making ceaseless prayers and intercessions on behalf of the world (cf. Heb. 4:14-15), and offering the sacrifice of their own selves in the service of God's Kingdom (cf. Heb. 2:17; 5:1; 8:3).

5.2.4. Enactment of the salvation drama

People's Eucharist narrates the salvation story, which is the story of God's mercy and faithfulness. God is merciful to "the sinners and the sinned against" (Raymond Fung). His mercy is upon those who suffer because they have sinned; he is equally merciful to those who suffer because others have sinned against them. The eucharistic story has two parts: one is the narrative of God's work of salvation that has reached its decisive stage in the life and work of Christ and awaits its resolution at the consummation of the Kingdom; the other is the story of the people of this world, who, in the complexities and turmoil of their sinful lives, are at the same time recipients God's mercy and salvation. In the People's Eucharist, the story of God and the stories of the people are brought together. God reveals his will and power in the lives and experiences of the people. Human stories derive their meaning by their association with the story of God's work of salvation.

People's Eucharist tries to capture the drama of divine salvation that unfolds in the Scriptures and breaks forth in the lives of the people. God's story is announced through the Scriptures, through preaching, and through human testimonies. People's stories have their origin in the worshipping community as well as outside its boundaries; they are highlighted in dramatic presentation and performance. Dramatisation enables better involvement and participation in worship, which is a learning process. The community-centred, issue-based, participatory and interactive theatre techniques from the tradition of the Peoples' Theatre are profitably used to involve the whole congregation physically and emotionally in the worship.

5.2.5. Instrument of the church's mission

People's Eucharist understands the Eucharist as "the bread of tomorrow." Those who gather around the Lord's table receive from God a vision of the future. It is as if they have gathered at the foot of the cross to recognise their common bond in Christ as brothers and sisters; in Christ they have been reconciled with God and with one another. They have an unending task to identify and overcome by the power of Christ the dividing walls of hostility, caste discrimination, gender bias, economic disparities, religious barriers, and other painful realities of life that continue to mar and destroy their oneness in Christ. They are aware of the needs, problems and aspirations of others who are outside their fellowship. The Spirit of God constantly forces them to extend the boundaries of their fellowship to include the outsiders; for that is the mission of the church.

The People's Eucharist emphasises the liberating work of Christ and announces it in the teeth of oppression and exploitation in today's world. The aim is to bring the eucharistic experience closer to the people whose salvation it announces. It involves taking the Eucharist out of the four walls of the church to the streets and to the areas of oppression so that it becomes a sure word of hope, a strong indictment of injustice, and a means of grace and new life. People's Eucharist is the Eucharist for all; it has increased relevance and applications in the life and worship of the poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed.

People's Eucharist is a byword for openness; it is the ministry of a church that would give up its defences and become vulnerable so that the message of salvation may be widely known. The relevance of taking the Eucharist to the streets may be questioned since the Eucharist is a sacrament of the church and only the church is able to experience the eucharistic fellowship. But to take the Eucharist to the people means to take the church to the people for whose salvation it stands. For, the church is a sacrament and a sign of God's grace upon the world. It is the church's mission to make its fellowship and service available to one and all and to bear witness to the redeeming love of God.

5.2.6. Learning to walk again

The purpose of People's Eucharist is to help ordinary men and women to come to grips with the issues of the world in which they live with its problems and suffering, sin and oppression and to respond to them from a Christian point of view. It enables the worshippers to commit themselves to fight on the side of God against evil, sin and oppression and everything else

that vitiate God's purpose for his creation. In People's Eucharist the learning process is no more clergy-centred; on the contrary it is a people-centred pedagogy that enables people to learn from one another and the worshipping community to grow together in Christian maturity. Through dialogue they draw on the spiritual resources available to the believing community. The value of the individual as a witness and a servant of God is acknowledged. The experience, expertise, and wisdom of each individual are recognised. The learning pace and problems of each individual are accepted without judgement. Everyone is inspired and encouraged to think and to articulate his or her views. The individual views are received without recrimination. In this way the community listens to the Word of God and in that process listens to one another. Their calling is to listen to the cries of the oppressed and to fight on the side of the one who died on the cross for the cause of the Kingdom. The church learns to walk again on the way of the cross.

5.2.7. Blending of cultures in Christ.

People's Eucharist sets the stage for the church to bring together the best of India's culture to the worship of the triune God. Cultural barriers break down when the local congregation shows willingness to be open and accessible to people who may belong to other communities, religions and ideologies but at the same time share the same moral, social, and spiritual concerns. It happens spontaneously as local congregations make use of the services of local artistes, local arts, crafts, literature, and media to narrate the story of salvation. In this way, this liturgy evinces a more positive attitude to India's cultural heritage that transforms the church's worship into a confluence of cultures.

The Eucharist is the celebration of God's victory over evil and his redemption of the world through Christ. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for everyone to experience that victory in his or her life. People's Eucharist creates an atmosphere for the whole church to respond thankfully to God and to make use of the spiritual gifts and talents that God has give to each member of the church. The worshippers are encouraged to dedicate themselves to be the heralds and servants of the coming Kingdom of God in a broken, sinful, oppressive world. As a participatory experience, worship becomes an enlightening, emboldening experience that transcends the social and cultural boundaries of the church to involve the wider community in the worship of the triune God.

5.3. Liturgical considerations

People's Eucharist builds upon the foundations laid by the eminent liturgists of the Church of South India in the past. It may be considered as a natural development of the CSI liturgy; in the People's Eucharist CSI liturgy blossoms out emphasising reconciliation and unity in the church and the society; it attempts to make those virtues real and practical in all areas of life. It builds on the emphasis of the CSI liturgy on congregational participation and makes the liturgical worship centred more on the people of God and their transformation.

5.3.1. The salient points

As a form of liturgy, the salient points of People's Eucharist are the following:

5.3.1.1. *Bridges a gap*

People's Eucharist tries to bridge the gap between “popular” religion and the “official” religion of the church. There are many in the Kerala CSI who crave for worship services, like those of the Pentecostal churches, which provide scope for some degree of participation, and offer some amount of personal attention. Others, who would not have anything to do with the Pentecostals, try to find satisfaction by attending the so-called “fellowship groups” which are found all over the CSI. These are lay initiatives, which provide its members with personal attention and scope for active involvement. In many CSI parishes, the organisation of such groups is discouraged by church leaders who view them as a threat to the “official” activities of the parish. But there are some parishes where the clergy and the parish committees encourage fellowship groups. They have come to terms with the fact that these groups fulfil a genuine need of the church and cater to the spiritual growth of the laity. Admittedly, the regular worship and pastoral activities of the church fail to satisfy these needs. The East Kerala Diocese (as it was shown earlier)³ has officially recognised the fellowship groups; the ministers by way of “patronising” these groups have taken over their leadership from the lay leaders. The church’s interest in these groups derives from the fear that they may play into the hands of Pentecostal or other “charismatic” denominations. But this fear is largely unfounded since the members of the fellowship groups are mostly loyal church members; they are resigned to the fact that the church is not able to appreciate their zeal for meaningful participation in the church’s life and ministry.

³ See above, Ch. 2, Sec. 2.3.5.3. (f).

What is seen in the above phenomena is the conflict between the free, participatory, laity-centred popular worship on the one hand, and the clergy-dominated, rigid liturgical worship on the other. People's Eucharist is an attempt to break this dichotomy. It is a liturgy for use in the church's formal worship and provides for maximum lay participation. People's Eucharist will bring alive the church's worship with the active involvement of the laity. When ordinary men and women of the church are brought to the centre of liturgical action, there is no paucity for liturgical ideas. What characterises popular spirituality is its rustic, down-to-earth character. The prayers of ordinary men and women, of youth and children spring from their needs, their fears, and their hopes. Their spirituality is saturated with their "blood, sweat and tears." When the People's Eucharist enables the laity to open their hearts in the warm fellowship of the worshipping assembly, the demarcation between popular religion and official religion fades away. The whole wealth of people's spirituality becomes available in the church's worship.

Freedom and participation are the hallmarks of People's Eucharist. These are qualities of a mature and responsible people. In one sense, People's Eucharist is the liturgy of mature Christianity. It presupposes a Christian culture, which will enable people to behave responsibly in the house of God. They demand an amount of openness, honesty, humility and integrity. The kind of storytelling and dramatisation used in worship also demand a certain amount of considerateness and deference for the community of worshippers. All these qualities will be fostered in the course of a liturgical life that integrates into its texture the insights, concerns, strength and fervour of the people.

5.3.1.2. Mission orientated

People's Eucharist takes the church outside its walls and becomes a means of proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God to those outside the church. It guides the believers to those who suffer oppression and persecution. It enables the church to pray and struggle for those who are totally helpless and desperate. It breaks down walls and makes the church an open community.

5.3.1.3. Flexible

Unlike the liturgies with fixed structures that the members of the CSI are acquainted with, the People's Eucharist has a flexible format. A distinction is made between the first part of the liturgy, namely, technically known as the *Synaxis* and the second part, namely, the

Eucharist proper.⁴ Flexibility applies more to the Synaxis rather than to the Eucharist proper. The quality of flexibility makes it possible to take into account the needs, concerns and aspirations of the community. But at the same time care is taken to see that the basic structure of the liturgy is maintained and all the essential elements of the Eucharist are included in the worship.⁵ The Eucharistic Prayer is central to the liturgy. The rest is a bare outline, which has to be fleshed out by the local worship leadership team with ideas from members of the congregation.⁶ Care is taken to incorporate the needs and concerns of the local community.

The worship leadership team functioning under the worship committee of the congregation is ultimately responsible for preparing the order of worship for the celebration of the Eucharist. The team will design a liturgy for each celebration and follow it faithfully without making extempore changes.

The liturgy will allow room for spontaneity and creativity that are guaranteed by the “stories of the people.” As it was discussed earlier,⁷ the stories are of two types: firstly, testimonies of personal experience of salvation; secondly, stories of suffering and oppression. These stories may include good and bad experiences, stories of success and failure, stories of pain, sickness or healing, stories of suffering or oppression, confessions of failure or guilt in personal or corporate life. Broadly speaking, all of them will possess a narrative format. The narratives may take the form of verbal statements, or otherwise. There may be presentations of newspaper clippings, statistical data, poetry and forms of fiction.

⁴ Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 37.

⁵ As mentioned earlier (see above, Ch. 2, page 110, footnote 53), the obligatory nine elements of Communion Service stipulated by the CSI Constitution are the following:

- i. Introductory prayers,
- ii. The Ministry of the Word,
- iii. The Preparation of the Communicants (Confession, Absolution, etc.),
- iv. The Offertory,
- v. The Thanksgiving, including the Words of Institution, setting apart of the communion (It is suggested that this section should begin with the *Sursum Corda* and the *Sanctus*),
- vi. An Intercession for the whole Church,
- vii. The Lord's Prayer,
- viii. The Administration of the Communion,
- ix. A Thanksgiving and self-dedication.

(The Creeds are optional). See Chapter 10, Rule 2 of *The Constitution of the Church of South India* (Madras: CLS, 1952; reprint, 1963) 60-62.

⁶ See “Guidelines” in Appendix C.

⁷ See above, Ch. 4, 4.4.2.2.

Presentations may take the form of video or multimedia presentations. They may also be in the form of improvisations or other artistic presentations.⁸

5.3.1.4. *Focuses on transformation*

Transformation and liberation are synonyms for the salvation experience that is brought about by the person and work of Christ. Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18), communion (fellowship) (1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Jn. 1:7) with God in Christ, new birth (Jn. 3:3,5), new life, new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), peace with God (Rom. 5:1), justification (Rom. 8:1) etc. are some of the biblical expressions for the new relationship with God. Transformation also implies unity – unity within the body of Christ where the members experience reconciliation and mutual acceptance. Gathering around the Lord's table, the worshipping community should seek to overcome caste barriers and all other socio-economic barriers. They should also seek to be reconciled with those are outside the boundaries of the church.

The liturgy as a whole and its individual parts focus on transformation and liberation. People's Eucharist is a form of worship that seeks change and transformation that only the Spirit of God is able to bring about.

5.3.2. The objectives of People's Eucharist

The objectives of the People's Eucharist is that it will enable the worshipper to:

- a. be aware of his or her predicament of oppression and suffering, whether self-imposed, inflicted by others, or by circumstances within or beyond human control;
- b. experience reconciliation and communion with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and in the fellowship of the church;
- c. be able to experience solidarity with those who suffer around the world, especially those who are the victims of various forms of injustice, oppression and exploitation; and,
- d. commit himself or herself to receive healing, liberation, new life and vision in Christ in order to serve and to bear witness to the Kingdom of God.

⁸ The atmosphere of the theatre could engender sincere personal narratives. Antonin Artaud, the exponent of the 'theatre of cruelty,' in his characteristically acrimonious manner speaks about the power of the theatre to externalise the hidden pressures of the mind. He says, "The theatre like a plague is a crisis, which is resolved by death or cure.... It causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness and hypocrisy of the world." See *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 30-31. See also Ch. 3, Sec. 3.6.2.

The participants of the People's Eucharist should be aware of these objectives in order to engage meaningfully in the liturgical action.

5.3.3. The components of People's Eucharist

Each component of the People's Eucharist stress the need for transformation that must take place in the church and in the wider community. As mentioned earlier, the most flexible part of the liturgy is the Synaxis or the "Liturgy of the Spirit."⁹ Just as in the CSI liturgy (1950/1979), this part appears under the two headings of *The Preparation* and *The Ministry of the Word* in the People's Eucharist. What is considered the Eucharist proper in the pre-Nicene liturgy is found under the heading, *The Breaking of the Bread*.

The Breaking of the Bread contains the core of the liturgy, which is the Eucharistic Prayer.¹⁰ Gregory Dix describes the shape of the pre-Nicene Eucharist,¹¹ which, according to him, is based on the four actions of Christ: taking, blessing, breaking, and distributing the bread (and the wine). These actions go further back to the framework of the Jewish ceremonial meal called *chaburah*. The four actions are (1) The Offertory (taking), (2) The Prayer (blessing), (3) The Fraction (breaking), and (4) The Communion (distributing). These are the four main constituents in the Eucharistic prayer of the People's Eucharist, but they need not always appear in the same order. Changes may be necessary to mark shifts of emphasis; for example, in the third model of the People's Eucharist given in this chapter, the offering follows the communion so that the offertory becomes an act of response to God's gift in the communion.

The major elements of the People's Eucharist are the following: '

5.3.3.1. *THE PREPARATION*

It is also called the "Gathering of the assembly into the grace, love and the koinonia of the triune God"¹²: The purpose of this section is to prepare the congregation for the worship of God.

⁹ Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 37.

¹⁰ As has been suggested in Appendix C, a number of versions of the Eucharistic Prayer approved by the Synod and Area Liturgy Committee may be made available to the local congregations so that they may be able to make use of them when they formulate their own versions of the People's Eucharist.

¹¹ *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 103-140.

¹² "The Fundamental Pattern (*Ordo*) of the Eucharistic Service," in *Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts*, eds. Thomas Best and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC, 1998) 35.

Words of welcome:

Words and gestures of welcome enable the participants to feel at home in the warmth of Christian fellowship and to become aware of the presence of other worshippers.

Adoration of the presence of God:

The participants in worship are enabled to experience the presence of God who is “worshipped by the angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven.” Prayers and praises in words, music and movements set the tone and atmosphere of worship. In the face of depressing and frightening situations in the world, the eucharistic community adores the presence of the liberating of God. The worshippers are filled with awe at the power and might of the God of salvation. They join the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision, praise the holiness and omnipresence of God (Isa. 6:1ff.). They are like the people who greeted and received Jesus at his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Mk. 11:9-10 pars. Cf. Rev. 5:8-14; 7:9-12).

Response to the presence of God:

Filled with awe in the presence of God people acknowledge their sins and ask for God’s forgiveness in the name of Christ (Confession). They are assured of forgiveness through Christ (Absolution). The purpose is to analyse personal life and the life of the society, to acknowledge and confess to God areas of bondage to sin, and to seek and receive forgiveness, freedom and reconciliation from God. The confession of David (Ps.51), Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), Daniel (Dan. 9:4-11, 18-19), the tax collector (Lk. 18:10-14), and Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10; cf. 15:11-24) are striking examples of people’s confession in the Scriptures.

Sharing of stories and testimonies:

People tell their stories and share their testimonies from their life and experiences. The stories come from the congregation as well as from the larger community outside, or from other parts of the world. These stories are of great importance to the church of God. They come from the cutting edge of the Gospel. They are presented in a participatory manner in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance. The purpose of storytelling is to promote understanding of the issues raised with a view to problem-solving in the light of the Word of God.

5.3.3.2. *THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD*

Listening to the Word of God:

The reading of the Bible lessons may be prefaced by readings from other scriptures and literature. Dramatic or other artistic presentations may be used profitably to highlight the message of the readings.

One or more lessons may be read from the Old and the New Testaments, which tell the story of salvation accomplished by the triune God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As many people as possible take part in the readings and the other presentations.

Response to the Word of God:

The readings enable the congregation to look at human predicament in the light of God's Word and to be filled with a deeper insight of God's love and the sure hope of God's redemption. The response of the people to the Word of God is repentance, faith and obedience. In this process the following activities have their place: (i) reflection and meditation on the Word of God, (ii) exposition of the Word of God, and (iii) the affirmation of faith.

Exposition of the Word of God:

The exposition(s) help the congregation to listen to, meditate on, and to explore God's Word of liberation. Examples of such exposition is found in the Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55; cf. I Sam. 2:1-10) and in Jesus' first preaching in Nazareth, the latter being an exposition of the liberating message of the Scriptures (Lk. 4: 16-21). There are other examples in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 2:14-40).

The People's Eucharist focuses on the word of hope and salvation that comes from the Bible. Short talks intended to challenge attitudes, to provoke thinking and to raise questions are preferred to sermons that take the form of monologues.¹³ Often church sermons fall short of applying the biblical message to life and of bridging the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of the common people. Biblical exposition should aim at communicating the liberating message of the Bible.

¹³ Paulo Freire believed that speeches and lectures are useful only if "the speech is taken as a challenge to be unveiled, and never as a channel of transference of knowledge." See Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987) 36.

The liberation theologians have shown the way. According to Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner,¹⁴ the purpose of exegesis, as practised by liberation theologians, is to focus on the meaning of the biblical text for today rather than on its meaning in the original situation. This is quite different from the method of historical criticism where the primary interest of the traditional exegete is confined to the original meaning of the text. It is also at variance with an individualistic “evangelical” approach of seeking nourishment purely for personal spiritual growth. The liberation approach on the other hand ascribes priority to the needs and problems of the community of today. They see a model for such an approach in the parables of Jesus. In narrating his parables, Jesus was interpreting the Scriptures in terms of the experiences of his listeners. He applied the truth of God to the circumstances and concerns of the people living in his day. Similarly, the liberation theologian tries to find the application of the biblical truth in the context of the life situations of the people. For the liberation theologian, “the setting for the reading [of the Scriptures] is not primarily the inner life of an individual Christian, but a world of poverty, disease and death in which good news comes to offer hope and a path to life.”¹⁵ Therefore “the experience of poverty and oppression is for the liberation exegete as important a text as the text of Scripture itself.”¹⁶ The liberation theologian believes that “truth can be arrived at not by abstraction but by attention to life.”¹⁷ The real life situations of the people provide the appropriate contexts for grasping the truths about God and of the human predicament and to discover the applications of those truths. So the poor and the oppressed should learn to read and interpret the Scriptures in the light of their own life and circumstances. The liberation theologian is convinced that the poor are the best interpreters of the Scriptures for they know where the shoe pinches; they have seen the rough side of life. They can identify with the situations of the Bible better than the academics who are more interested in exegetical hair-splitting rather than in the daily struggles of the common people! The stories of the people, their poems, songs, and plays are the real raw materials of theology. Examples of the marvellous insights of grassroots exegesis are available from the experience of the Basic Christian Communities

¹⁴ Christopher Rowland and Mark Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*, Biblical Foundations in Theology (London: SPCK, 1990).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

of Latin America; ordinary men and women share eye-opening interpretations of the Scripture in terms of their experiences of poverty, oppression, and longing for deliverance.¹⁸

Carlos Mesters, who has years of first-hand acquaintance with grassroots exegesis, enumerates its three elements. They are “the Bible itself, the community, and reality (i.e., the real-life situation of the people and the surrounding world).”¹⁹ The community that gathers to study the Word of God brings to the discussion the reality of life’s struggles experienced by common people. The mutual engagement of these three elements generates fresh insights for Christian praxis. Mesters explains the mechanics of this exegesis; he says, “When they read the Bible, they are not trying to interpret the Bible; they are trying to interpret life with the help of the Bible. They are altering the whole business. They are shifting the axis of interpretation.”²⁰ Mesters sees this as a reaction to the way the clergy or the professional interpreters of the church have monopolised biblical interpretation in the past. Now the Bible has fallen into the right hands, into the hands of its rightful owners, who are able to interpret its message in the light of their struggles. Mesters says,

We [the clergy] took the Bible out of the hands of the common people, locked it with a key and then threw the key away. But the people have found the key and are beginning again to interpret the Bible. And they are using the only tool they have at hand: their own lives, experiences, and struggles.²¹

Mesters is convinced that grassroots exegesis empowers the people for liberation. But at the same time he is neither blind to its pitfalls that stem from the neglect of the historical background of the biblical texts, nor does he rule out the possibilities of narrow, “subjectivistic” interpretations or the misuse of the Bible to suit one’s pet notions.

People’s Eucharist encourages people to interpret the Scriptures in the light of their personal experience of God and of life. For, it is ordinary men and women grappling with the coarse realities of life who can interpret the Bible best. They may use stories and songs, poems and art to articulate their ideas and insights. Theatre has an important role here; it provides them with artistic resources that will help them to explore the different dimensions of the gospel from different angles. It will also help them to apply the gospel to different life situations.

¹⁸ See for example, Ernesto Cardinal, *Love in Practice: the Gospel in Solentiname*, mentioned above (Ch. 4, sec. 4.4.2.1.).

¹⁹ Carlos Mesters, “The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People,” in *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, eds. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981; reprint, 1988) 199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

Affirmation of faith:

This is an occasion to declare the liberating work of God in the history and the life of the people of God. Apart from the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed which connect the local church with the faith of the universal church, new confessions of faith also may be used. The church's confession of faith should also interweave the story of God's salvation with the story of the people of God.

Intercessions:

The CSI Constitution insists that the intercessions must include a prayer for the church that it may be able to be faithful to its calling.²² The intercessions enable the worshipping community to affirm its solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the exploited, the dispossessed and the suffering ones, and those who struggle to alleviate their pain and to liberate them. At intercession the church mediates with God on their behalf. In so doing the church participates in the sacrificial ministry of the one mediator between people and God, even Jesus Christ. The disciples' concern for the hungry crowds (Mk. 6:35-36 pars.), their plea on behalf of the Canaanite woman (Mk. 15:23), and the mediation of the elders of the Jews on behalf of the Roman centurion (Lk. 7:4-5) provide illustrations of people's intercession in the Gospels.

5.3.3.3. *THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD*

The Breaking of the Bread comes as the climax of the liturgical drama. In this part of the worship the emphasis is on the transformation that the Spirit of God effects upon the worshipping community. As a result, the congregation experiences its identity with the crucified and risen Christ in his continuing mission upon the earth, which is to bring the Kingdom of God to its consummation.

The Eucharistic Prayer:

Like the Creed, the Eucharistic Prayer is an epigrammatic statement of the church's faith. Local congregations may be able to give shape to new forms of Eucharistic Prayer; but sufficient study and careful deliberation should go into its preparation. It seems necessary to insist that a form of the Eucharistic Prayer thus formulated should receive the approval of a

²¹ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

²² *The Constitution of the CSI*, Chapter 10, section 12.

representative body of the church authorised to deal with liturgical matters before it is used in the regular worship of the church. This is to ensure wider support and popular involvement for the new prayer. While formulating the Eucharistic Prayer, it is necessary to pay proper attention to the various components. *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (Rome, ca. AD 215) is a valuable resource for understanding the classic shape of the Eucharistic Prayer.²³

The Eucharistic Prayer of the People's Eucharist should emphasise the incarnation and the public ministry of Christ as well as the death and resurrection and Christ's promise of his return because all these events belong together and shed light on one another. Emphasis on the death of Christ at the neglect of other events in his life can lead to a distorted understanding of the work of Christ. The Eucharistic Prayer needs to highlight also the transformation that the eucharistic communion brings to the worshipping community and to the whole world.

Elsewhere in this dissertation it was argued that in the biblical accounts the emphasis of the Last Supper is placed on the transformation of the participants rather than of the eucharistic elements.²⁴ This view is supported by the Emmaus story concerning the disciples whose eyes were opened when Jesus broke the bread with them (Lk. 24:28-35) and the moving account of the transformation of the backtracking disciples by the Sea of Tiberias with whom the risen Christ shared a meal (Jn. 21). These passages are stories of eucharistic encounters

²³ According to *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (which Dix qualifies as "the most important source of information we possess on the liturgy of the pre-Nicene church." See *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 157), the Eucharistic Prayer has the following structure:

- "(a) Address: Relation of the Father to the Eternal Word.
- (b) Thanksgiving for Creation through the Word.
- (c) Thanksgiving for the Incarnation of the Word.
- (d) Thanksgiving for Redemption through the Passion of the Word.
- (e) Statement of Christ's purpose in instituting the eucharist.
- (f) Statement of His Institution of the eucharist.
- (g) Statement of His virtual command to repeat the action of (f) with a virtual promise of the result attaching to such repetition.
- (h) Claim to the fulfilment of the promise in (g).
- (i) Offering of the elements
- (j) constituting the obedience to the command in (g), with an interpretation of the meaning understood by this obedience.
- (k) Prayer for the effects of communion.
- (l) Doxology." See Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 158.

See also Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Charles U. Quinn (Notre Dame and London: Notre Dame University Press, 1968) and Cheslyn Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold and P. Bradshaw, *The Study of the Liturgy*, revised edn. (London: SPCK and New York: OUP, 1992; reprint, 1993).

²⁴ See above, Ch. 1, sec. 1.3.4.

with the Risen Lord.²⁵ Today the worshipping congregation is also privileged to experience the transforming presence of the risen Lord.

Therefore the *anamnesis* in the eucharistic prayer is not a ritual remembrance of Christ but rather an articulation of the church's experience of the presence of the risen Christ who will examine personal lives and social relationships. The sense of the presence of Christ must drive away the coldness and spiritual lethargy of the worshippers. It must provoke the church to contrition and repentance (cf. Isa. 6:5; Lk. 5:8).

People's response:

The Offertory, The Peace, the Communion or the receiving of bread and wine, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving are liturgical gestures that are related to the personal and corporate response of the worshipper at the Eucharist.

The offertory:

The offertory is a sign of self-dedication. It is one of the highlights of the eucharistic service. It involves self-dedication to the service of the kingdom, which expresses itself in the service of fellow-beings. Jesus has given himself (Phil. 2:5-8); the Christian response would be to imitate the widow who gave all that she had, her whole means of living; in fact, she gave herself (Mk. 12:41-44 pars.), or the woman who anointed Jesus (Mk. 14:3-9 pars.). These offerings involved total self-giving and sacrifice.²⁶ The offertory signifies the giving of one's best to God. The best music, the best arts, and the best fruits of the church's talents and spiritual gifts may be offered in worship and dedicated to God. But such offertory is in vain unless it is equalled by a willingness to pursue the ways of humility, honesty, and justice in one's social relations (cf. Isa. 1:11—17; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8; Rom. 12:1-2).

Discussing the classical shape of the Eucharist, Gregory Dix finds that the offertory has a very significant place in the early liturgies. He bases his argument on the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus and the writings of Clement of Rome, Justin, Ignatius, Irenaeus, and others.²⁷ According to Dix, the offertory is not an extra or optional part of the liturgy.

²⁵ E.g., Isaiah's vision of Yahweh at the temple culminated in the equipping and commissioning of Isaiah as a prophet (Isa. 6:6-9). Similarly Jeremiah is equipped (Jer. 1:7-9). In the New Testament, John in the Book of Revelation is encouraged by the vision of the Risen Christ (Rev. 1:17-19). The burning bush in Moses' vision (Exod. 3:1-6) and the offering consumed by fire at Elijah's prayer (1 Kgs. 18:36-39) place the emphasis on the transformation in the attitude of the worshippers.

²⁶ "No offering is complete without a tear" — Anon.

²⁷ Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 110-123.

Rather, according to him, "It [offertory] is an integral and original part of the whole eucharistic action, not a preliminary to it, like the kiss of peace."²⁸ He argues further: "The offertory and the [eucharistic] prayer and the communion are closely connected moments in a single continuous action, and each only finds its proper meaning as a part of the whole."²⁹ It is inseparably related to the acts of consecration and the communion in the eucharistic worship. In the early church it was expected that every communicant would bring an offertory of bread and wine as a symbol of his or her self-offering in response to the self-giving of Christ. The bread that Christ brings to the table is his own body, and the wine he offers is his own blood. Similarly the worshippers (both clergy and laity) should also offer to God their own selves so that God may accept them in his beloved Son. By making the personal offering of one's own self, which no one else can do on one's behalf, the lay person is exercising his or her priestly prerogative. While each worshipper makes his or her own personal offertory, they are all part and parcel of the one self-offering of the whole body of the church. Dix says,

In the united oblations of all her members of the Body of Christ, the church gave herself to become the body of Christ, the sacrament, in order that receiving again the symbol of herself now transformed and hallowed, she might be truly that which by nature she is, the Body of Christ, and each of her members members of Christ.³⁰

Dix reminds the worshippers that the offering of selves is only a preliminary act, as the Last Supper was preliminary to the Jesus final act of sacrifice on the cross.³¹ One may go on to elaborate the words of Dix and reflect that the ritual act of self-dedication or self-offering has to be matched by actual obedience as a true disciple and witness of Christ in the church and the society. Yet it is a significant step that the worshipper takes when, in communion with the crucified and risen Christ, he makes an offertory of his own life at the Eucharist.

Therefore People's Eucharist stresses the personal and corporate response of the worshippers to the redemptive love of God revealed at the cross. They renew their covenant with the Lord dedicating themselves, their concerns, their future, their resources and talents in the service of God's Kingdom. The participants make evident their willingness to join in the liberating mission of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and to live in peace with their neighbours. All these are expressed in clear ritual actions.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

The Communion:

The Communion is an occasion for experiencing renewed fellowship with God and for expressing the reconciliation, fellowship, and the unity that Christ offers to the participants in the Eucharist. Economic and social divisions and caste-based rifts within the congregation should be challenged and overcome in the Communion. The eucharistic communion should lead to wider co-operation and fellowship within the congregation.

Thanksgiving:

The worshipping assembly thanks God for the completed work for human salvation and liberation of God in Christ, for his continued presence, for fresh insights, for the spirit of freedom and for the work of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction:

The benediction is the declaration of the blessing of the triune God upon the church which, feeding on the life of the risen Lord, sets out to join God's liberating mission in God's world (cf. I Thess. 5:14-24).

Repentance, faith, and transformation – they are all gifts of God. The worship committee may plan the worship in such a way as to help the worshippers to be receptive to the work of the Spirit of God. The congregation may be enabled to become aware of areas in personal life and in the life of the community where change is needed. Areas of need and poverty, oppression and exploitation, social negligence and apathy, and other problem areas of the society and the wider world may be highlighted in as concrete terms as possible.

Repentance, faith in God, and openness to the Word of God will have their effects on personal and social relationships. In this way the worshipping community may be enabled to respond to its calling and to be transformed more and more into a servant community.

5.4. Two models of People's Eucharist

Liturgies are like plays, which are lifeless scripts until they come alive in performance on the stage. Liturgies spring to life when the people of God inspired by the Spirit of God bring their broken hearts and spiritual gifts to worship.

There are two models of People's Eucharist in this section that demonstrate the structure and method of the People's Eucharist (A third model is given in Appendix D). It must be emphasised that these are only models of People's Eucharist; actual liturgies have to be evolved in the context of the life of the congregations. Moreover, the "stories of the people" have to come from the people; stories, testimonies, and biblical expositions authored by the people are the real hallmarks of the People's Eucharist. In these model liturgies a few examples of the stories are given just to show how they can be incorporated into the worship. An authentic liturgy takes its origin in the life and struggles of a worshipping community, and it reflects the needs, problems and aspirations of ordinary people. Living liturgies belong to the people in every sense. It keeps pace with living conditions, social changes and regional differences. Unlike poetry and Shakespearean plays, liturgies are not forever. Liturgies cannot afford to be unresponsive and unchanging. An unchanging liturgy is a dead liturgy; dead liturgies create dead churches for which there are enough examples.

5.4.1. People's Eucharist: Model 1:

Theme: "**The Family**"

The following model of the People's Eucharist generally follows the *CSI Order of the Holy Eucharist* under the headings, The Preparation, The Ministry of the Word of God, and The Breaking of the Bread.³² The Eucharistic Prayer is taken from the Revised Version (CSI) of 1971.³³

The liturgy focuses on the family and the liberation it needs from various kinds of bondage and the strength it seeks in crisis situations.³⁴ The dramatic episodes in the liturgy illustrate these situations. The worshippers are encouraged to discuss the oppressive situations and

³² An early version of this liturgy was used in a community service of the Eucharist in the chapel of the K. U. T. Seminary, Trivandrum, Kerala. It included three dramatic episodes (including the "Story of Job") and a dialogue sermon involving the participation of a good number of the members of the community. But lay participation in the planning of the liturgy was minimal. Nevertheless people's participation in the celebration was appreciated. On the whole the liturgy received a positive response, as indicated by a general discussion that followed the worship.

³³ (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1972) 11.

³⁴ For example, according to a newspaper report, there has been a spate of family suicides in Kerala recently (The term 'family suicide' refers to suicides by all the members of a family). Even otherwise Kerala has "the country's highest rate of suicide." The report attributes this mainly to the inability to cope with the rapid and exhausting tempo of social change. "Massive urbanisation, coupled with galloping consumerism, and the collapse of the traditional social and family relationships, ... marital incompatibility, affairs outside marriage, chronic illnesses of family members" are shown as some of the causes of suicide. See *The Hindu*, 7 May 1997 (Online edition).

their solutions. The discussions hinge on a short biblical exposition. It is suggested that the worshippers reflect on the Word of God in the light of the dramatic episodes and their own personal experiences.

The affirmation of the faith may be made either in the words of the Nicene Creed or in a modern version of the creed that applies the church's faith to the circumstances of daily life and experiences. The liturgy contains prayers from India's religious tradition. Liturgical response to God's salvation includes the Offertory and a symbolic act of self-dedication. The liturgy involves the laity in the planning of the worship and in its celebration. In fact, lay leadership is absolutely essential in the presentation of the stories of the people and in the exposition and the application of the Scriptures to daily life.

The Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist

[‘P’ stands for ‘Presbyter’ and ‘C’ for ‘Congregation’]

Theme: **“The Family”**

Preliminaries: Welcome, announcements, etc.

THE PREPARATION

P: Let us pray:

O Lord our God, whom our souls adore, draw near to us, and bless us with your presence. As the leaves of a tree may hide the moon, so do our own desires hide you from our eyes. But even when our soul is as dark as the night, may the light of your beauty shine through like the stars. Fill our hearts with the light of your presence until they glow like the dawn. Fill our eyes with the light of your love until we see none but you alone. For Lord our God, you alone are our prayer, our praise, and our worship; through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. **Amen.**³⁵

C: *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Hymn

The Confession

P: Today we focus our attention on the family. Let us ask the Lord to transform and renew our families and to glorify his name through their witness. Let us kneel and spend a few moments in silence calling to mind our personal failures as members of Christian families and ask for God's forgiveness and mercy.

Silence

P: We confess, O living God, that we have often forgotten that our families are your gracious gifts to us. In our families we have not been always faithful to you. When we were happy, healthy and prosperous we have failed to thank you. When we were in trouble, sickness, or sin we have not sought your help and deliverance.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: We confess that we have often taken the members of our families for granted. We have been miserly in expressing our thanks and appreciation for their love and care. Often we have been uncharitable and ungenerous in our words and selfish and thoughtless in actions. We acknowledge and lament our shortcomings as sons, daughters, husbands and wives, parents, relatives, and neighbours.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: Often we have been inconsiderate about the feelings of others, blind to their sufferings, and careless in our words and actions. We are sorry for misusing power, privilege, and influence to impose our own will on our families and our neighbours instead of trying to help them or comfort them.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: Lord, we are truly sorry for our wrongs. We ask for pardon and for your help to mend broken relationships.³⁶ Depending not on our virtue, nor on our faith, but solely on your grace, we seek your pardon and ask for your peace.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

³⁵ Adaptation of the poem "Invocation" by Chandran Devanesen, *The Infinite Christ* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1948) 1.

³⁶ From "Like a Tree Planted by Rivers of Water," *Worshipping Ecumenically: Orders of Service from Global Meetings with Suggestions for Local Use*, ed. Per Harling (Geneva: WCC, 1995) 43.

P: On behalf of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, I assure you: you are forgiven, forgive others. You are restored, restore others. You are reconciled with God, be reconciled with others. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen. Thanks be to God.*³⁷

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

P: Let us pray:

The Collect:

Heavenly Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named, send your blessing upon all families. May husbands and wives honour one another as joint heirs of the grace of life. May children rejoice because the kingdom of God belongs to such as theirs. May all families prosper in the love and fear of God and in the practice of neighbourly virtues. May we all remember that only homes built upon the solid rock of the Word of God stand fast in the face of adversities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The congregation sings a bhajan (prayer song) for divine illumination while a nilavilakku (oil lamp) is being lit:

From the unreal lead us to the real.

From darkness lead us to the light.

From death lead us to immortality. Amen.

Different members of the congregation may read one or more of the following lessons.

Old Testament lesson: Job 1: 1-12

The Psalm: Ps. 128

Epistle lesson: I Pet. 3:1-7.

Gospel lesson: Mt. 7:24-29

Hymn

Exposition of the Word of God

In a brief message the presbyter (or any one else) may draw attention to the biblical understanding of the family especially in the context of the challenges it faces in today's society. He or she may sketch a background of the lessons and show their inter-relatedness.

³⁷ "Confessions of Sin," Per Harling, in *Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts*, 131.

It is also desirable to give a short introduction to the stories or dramatic episodes that follow.

1. The Story of Job (A dramatic episode)

[Job is seated on a chair, reading and meditating on the Scriptures. A prayer song is heard in the background. The first servant rushes in and salutes Job. He gasps for breath]

First servant: Master, the oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you.

[Job is obviously concerned about the news. Another servant enters.]

Second servant: Master, the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you.

[Job rises. A third servant enters]

Third servant: The Chaldeans formed three companies, and made a raid upon the camels and took them, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you.

[Job is distressed. A fourth servant enters, a broken man. Every one turns to him. He salutes Job but hides his face from Job]

Fourth servant (splutters with great emotion): Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead ... and I alone....

[His voice is muffled by Job's heart-rending cry. Job sinks to his knees, huge sobs convulsing his frame. The servants now playing the roles of his comforters move closer but they are unable to console him]

Job: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

[Job slowly gets to his feet but he has become a very sick and miserable person with loathsome sores covering his body. He looks at himself, shudders and covers his face.]

Job's wife (voice over): Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!

Job: You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?

[Job continues to suffer. He laments]

Job: Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, 'A man child is conceived.' Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.... O that my vexation were weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances! For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison....

[A distraught Job bends down and covers his face. His friends are helpless. After a pause of a few seconds, Job slowly lifts up his head. His face expresses the peace, joy and hope filling his heart. His hands move upwards as if to grasp at the vision. His voice rises. His transformation is reflected in the faces of his comforters]

Job: ... I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another!

[Lively music in the background]

The dramatic presentation is followed by group discussion.

Or

2. Tableaux on different kinds of families may be presented. For this purpose the participants may be divided into several groups. Each group may be asked to give shape to a tableau that shows the present state of a typical family (problem) in the community. Each tableau may highlight the nature of the family and the attitudes, concerns, and mutual relationships of its members. One after the other, the tableaux are shown to the larger group. Each family situation is discussed. Then the spect-actors comprising the larger group suggest changes to transform each family situation into an ideal situation. 'Magical' or simplistic solutions should be avoided. The "ideal" image is subjected to debate and necessary modifications.

Or

3. A drama on a modern family may be presented. This may be done by means of a Modified Forum theatre technique. In the case of the following episode, "Asha" may be

distinguished as the protagonist. But presumably she alone cannot solve the problem without changes taking place in the attitudes of other members of the family. Therefore it is suggested that first of all the 'spect-actors' try to replace Asha and use all means to solve the problem with the effort of that single character. If they fail to achieve this end after several attempts, a modified form of the Forum Theatre may be presented. The proposed modified Forum is in fact a combination of Boal's Forum Theatre with Boal's own Image Theatre. In Image Theatre, any number of changes in the behaviour of the characters to illustrate the transition from Real Image to the Ideal Image is possible.³⁸ Similarly in the modified Forum Theatre, the other characters are also replaced one after the other, just as the protagonist, by different spect-actors until a satisfactory solution is arrived at.

The "Female Child"³⁹ (A dramatic episode)

[Scene. The sitting-cum-dining room of a well-to-do Kerala home. Elias, a middle-aged man, is on the sofa going through his office files. Annie, his wife, is clearing the table after a family meal. A sheet of paper in hand, Asha, their daughter, a girl of 13 or 14 tries to catch the attention of her father.]

Asha: Dad! Dad!

[No response]

Asha: Dad! Here's my school report.

Elias: (irritated) Can't you see that I'm busy now? What's that? Later. Later. Or, show it to your mum.

Annie [coldly, to Asha]: Put it away and get me some water from the kitchen.

Asha: Our class teacher has asked us to pay three hundred rupees each for the school trip.

Annie: What trip? You aren't going anywhere.

Asha: Everyone in our class is going. Remember last year? You didn't allow me to go, then either. Oh mum, please. Let me go this time.

Annie: I've told you, you aren't going anywhere. Now go and get the water for me.

[Crestfallen, Asha goes inside and soon returns with a mug of water. But she drops it]

³⁸ See above Ch. 3, sec. 3.4.4.3. (a)

³⁹ This is the term often used in the documents of the Government of India to denote the girl child.

Asha: Sorry, mum!

Annie: Sorry! You're so careless. Look what you've done to the floor! Clean it up!

[Asha brings some cloth and tries to clean up]

Annie (angrily): Such a clumsy girl! I have no patience with you. You are so uncaring. Just like your dad! I work my fingers to the bone at the office and at home, day in, day out. No one cares. All that your dad cares about is his work and his friends.

Elias (chafed, looks up from his file): What *exactly* is your problem?

Annie: So you aren't deaf after all? Why don't you ever help me with the housework? I do the shopping, cooking, washing, and cleaning-up. I bring up the children, I look after their schooling. You don't have the time even to look at their school reports. How could you be so selfish and irresponsible?

Elias: I am *not* irresponsible. I have important work to do. It's not some silly voluntary work like yours.

Annie: If your work is important for you, so is mine. But my hands are full. It is the sheer amount of work that wears me out.

Elias: You find your hands full because you don't plan your time properly. And if you can't manage your voluntary work and the home at the same time, you must give up your volunteering.

Annie: So that's what you want. I know that you are jealous because my work gets publicity in the media.

Elias: Me! Jealous of you! Good heavens! Woman, you are out of your mind. And you call that work! All you do there is sit around chatting with some silly women from morning till evening, three days a week.

Annie: Don't call them silly women. They are respectable community leaders.

Elias: May be so. And what do you achieve? You're totally inefficient. That's what you are. You aren't able to do anything well. You can't even control that unruly son of yours. Where is he? It's ten o'clock now and he hasn't shown up yet. When is he going to study?

Annie: He stays away because he's angry. Why don't you give him the money he wants for a motorbike? He has been asking for it for ages.

Elias: He does not take his schoolwork seriously. He's careless about money and you want me to buy him a motor bike!

Annie: He wants a bike because all his friends have bikes. What's wrong with that?

Elias: Everything. He just wants to show off in front of his friends. I don't have any money to be wasted on his ego trip.

[Arun, a boy 17 or 18, enters and stands at the door. He is returning from his classes. He glares at his father for a minute, throws his books on the floor and storms out in anger.]

Annie: (Loudly) Arun! Arun!! Where are you going? Asha, go and call him back!

[Asha hesitates, then goes out]

Elias: Let him go where he wants. He won't change. He'll come to no good if he keeps that sort of company. (Listens) What's the noise? Did someone slip and fall?

[Asha enters, sobbing. Her nose bleeds. Obviously her brother has slapped her. She collapses on the sofa, her face in her hands].

Annie (yells at Asha): Now what's that? Why do you wail? You're the root of all the trouble in this house!

This is followed by a Forum (or modified Forum) Theatre.

Or

5. Members of the congregation representing different age groups and genders narrate stories from the family scene.

Reflection:

Keeping the message of the Scripture readings in mind, the participants discuss questions similar to those given below. These may be discussed in one large group or in a number of small groups:

What are the oppressive attitudes and tendencies that destroy the peace and unity of families? How can families face crisis situations? What resources are available for them to survive such situations? What attitudes must be adopted in the light of the Gospel of Christ?

If the discussions were conducted in small groups, their representatives could report on their findings and their practical suggestions for the benefit of all the participants.

Affirmation of faith

The Nicene Creed or a modern affirmation of faith like the following may be used:

P: God speaks to us in his Word and in the stories of his people. We respond by confessing our faith:

C: *I believe in God, Creator of the world and womb of life, Father and Mother of all creatures who cares for the many-orbited universe and within it, the earth.*

I believe that God was in Jesus of Nazareth, that Jesus announced the coming of God's reign of justice, peace and a good creation, that he lived this joyful news and sealed it with his death on the cross and that God raised him as our Christ to new life.

*I believe that God offers to all human beings the Spirit of love and reconciliation which lives in Christ Jesus, that this Spirit comforts us in our troubles and fears and spurs us on to hope and to work for God's world to come. Amen.*⁴⁰

Intercession

The following litany may be used. Additional prayers or biddings including specific requests mentioning names of people in need may be included. Alternatively, the presbyter may call upon two or three participants to offer extempore prayers.

Leader: In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray:

Heavenly Father, bless all families. Help husbands and wives to love, respect and care for one another. Enable parents to care for the emotional and spiritual needs of their children as much as they care for their physical and intellectual needs. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

⁴⁰ Creed adapted from Kurt Rose and Wolfgang Teichmann, "A Mass for Our Time," *Eucharistic Worship*, 117-118

Leader: May children learn to love and to care for one another and for others. May they learn especially to be considerate to the infirm, the disabled, and the elderly. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: Help families to love their neighbours and to work together for the welfare of everyone in the community and in the larger society. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: Have compassion on families suffering pain, sickness, bereavement or financial difficulties. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: May your church, the family of the families of God, ever be a loving and caring community founded on justice and peace. May the church constantly strive with hope for the consummation of your Kingdom. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: Lord, you answer us before we call and hear us while we are yet speaking. We thank you for listening to our prayers and petitions. Help us to be persistent in prayer and constant in your praise. Grant that we may not only receive the things that we asked for but also find rest for our tired minds and broken bodies always in the cool shade of your healing presence. Through Christ our only Mediator. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Hymn

P: How good and joyful it is when brothers live in unity.

(Ps.133:1)

We who are many are one body, for we all share the one bread.

(1 Cor. 10:17)

May there be peace in the highest heavens; may there be peace in the firmament; may there be peace on earth. May the waters flow peacefully; may the herbs and plants grow peacefully; may all the divine powers bring us to peace. The supreme Lord is peace. May we all be in peace, peace and only peace; and may that peace come to each of us.⁴¹ Through Christ our Lord, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Sisters and brothers, let us greet one another with a sign of peace.

⁴¹ "A prayer from the *Vedas*." See Angela Tilby, "Act of Worship: 10 January 1997," in *The Daily Service Prayer Book*, ed. Lavinia Byrne (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1998) 46.

The worshippers exchange a sign of peace.

The offertory is brought forward

P: Holy Father, you have opened a new and living way for us to come to you through the self-offering of Jesus. We are not worthy to offer gifts to you, but through him we ask you to accept and use us and our gifts for your glory. **Amen.**

All: *Be present, be present, O Jesus, our good High Priest, as you were in the midst of your disciples, and make yourself known to us in the breaking of the bread. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

P: Come to this table to meet the living God,
 Love indescribable and beyond our imagining
 yet closer than our own breathing.
 Come to this table to meet the risen Christ,
 flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone,
 God-with-us, embodied in our living.
 Come to this table, to meet the life-giving Spirit,
 interpreting our search for truth and justice,
 Breathing into us renewing power.
 Come to find, to meet, to hold
 the living, loving God
 made new for us in bread and wine.⁴²

All: *We come to you, O gracious Father, counting on your goodness and mercy. We do not deserve even the crumbs under your table. Give us grace now to enter into communion with your dear Son Jesus Christ. Cleanse us with the body and blood of Christ, which were given for our salvation. May Christ live in us and we in him as we lay our lives before you. Renew and transform us through your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Self-dedication

This is an occasion for the worshippers to express their personal e dedication, particularly in the light of the Word of God, the 'stories of the people,' and the issues that were highlighted in the worship. An appropriate symbolic action may be adopted to express the

⁴² Jan Berry, in *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992) 9.

dedication of one's talents, gifts, and time to the Lord. They may write a word or draw a picture on small pieces of paper to symbolise a particular gift or area of life that they would particularly want to dedicate. These pieces of paper may be placed in a receptacle on the Lord's Table. Or they may place symbolic objects in the receptacle. Then all return to their seats.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

P: Let us give thanks.

C: *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

P: It is good and right always and everywhere to give you thanks O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everliving God:

Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, for through him you created all things from the beginning, and made people in your own image; through his life-giving words, his acts of compassion, his humble service, his passion and his victory, you have redeemed us from the slavery of sin; through him you have sent out your Holy Spirit to make us your own people, the first-fruits of your new creation. And so we join the angels and the saints proclaiming your glory as we say (sing):

C: *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might,*

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

P: Truly holy are you, our Father. In your love for us you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be one of us and to die on the cross for us. By that one perfect sacrifice, he took away the sins of the whole world and commanded us to remember his death until he comes again. So, on the night he was betrayed, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat; this is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. So also after supper he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to them and said: Drink it, all of you, for this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for you and all people, to forgive sin. Do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

C: *Amen. Your death, O Lord, we remember, your resurrection we proclaim, your final coming we await. Christ, to you be glory.*

P: And so Father, remembering that Jesus, your Son and our Lord, was born and lived among us, suffered and died, rose again and ascended, we, your people, are doing this to remember him as he commanded us until his coming again, and we thank you for reconciling and restoring us to you in him.

C: *O Lord, our God, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

P: And we humbly ask you Father, to take us and this bread and wine, that we offer to you, and make them your own by your Holy Spirit, so that our breaking of the bread will be a sharing in Christ's body and the cup we bless a sharing in his blood. Join us all together in him. Make us one in faith. Help us to grow up as one body, with Christ as our head. And let us all together, in the Holy Spirit, bring glory to you, our Father. *Amen.*

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour gave us:

All: *Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

Silence

The Fraction

P: "Can bread give us strength, or feed, unless it first be broken for the need?

Or shall the vine, with grapes uncrushed, for others yield its wine?"⁴³

The body of Christ, broken for the life of the world!

The blood of Christ, poured out for the life of the world!

May we who are the church and the body of Christ, be broken for the love of all people and for the peace of all nations!

⁴³ Jalal Al-Din Rumi: *Mathnawi* in Kenneth Cragg, *Alive to God: Muslim and Christian Prayer* (London: O.U.P., 1970) 118.

C: O Saviour of the world, who by your Cross and precious Blood has redeemed us: save us and help us we pray.

The ministers and people receive the bread and the wine.

The following words of administration may be used:

“The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of life.”

“The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Vine.”

When all have received communion, the presbyter says:

L: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank you for this holy communion. Thank you for sharing your love with us in the life of Jesus Christ and the light of the Holy Spirit. May we, who were fed with your goodness in the warm fellowship of your church, the family of the families of God, live in your world as members of one body, in constant fellowship and dedicated service to one another and to others.

C: Lord, open our eyes that they may see the needs of others. Move our hands that they may feed the hungry. Touch our hearts that they may bring warmth to the despairing. Give us the care that strengthens the sick. Make us share the quest to set the prisoners free. For, it is in sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity, that we partake of your divine presence. In Jesus name. Amen.⁴⁴

P: May the love of the cross, the power of the resurrection, and the presence of the Living Lord, be with you always. And the blessing of the Eternal God, Creator and Sustainer, Risen Lord and Saviour, Giver of holiness and love, be upon you now and evermore.⁴⁵

C: Amen. Thanks be to God.

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⁴⁴ Adapted from Canaan Banana (Zimbabwe), *Bread of Tomorrow*, 25

⁴⁵ Benediction taken from “Your Will Be Done – Mission in Christ’s Way,” in *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 82.

5.4.2. People's Eucharist: Model 2

Theme: “**Justice for Women**”

The Eucharist, being the most eloquent and elegant expression of faith, is an instrument of the church's mission.⁴⁶ It will be useful if every parish conducts an open-air Eucharist once or twice a year. It has particular relevance in India's (and Kerala's) multi-religious situation where there is tremendous need for mutual understanding among religious communities. Worship can bring communities together. It is an inclusive approach to evangelism that welcomes people of different faiths and ideologies into the church's fellowship. In fact, the church is “a house of prayer for all the nations” (Mk. 11:17; cf. Isa. 56:6-7).

Participating in a special service of the Eucharist in a clean, beautiful and peaceful atmosphere with the presence and co-operation of the local community, is a memorable and rewarding experience. Open-air celebrations may be conducted in connection with a church festival; in several parts of India, it is usual to hold such services on an Easter Sunday or in connection with the harvest festival. These may be conducted in a clean and relatively peaceful public space where members of the local community could assemble. It could also be held in the grounds of the church. Such a venue is preferable to a busy street side or a deserted location.

There are many reasons for the church to hold a public celebration of the Eucharist. First of all, it provides a grant opportunity for the church to lift up to God the life of the whole village or of the city and to intercede with God on its behalf. Secondly, it is an occasion to establish friendly relations with the church's neighbours and its wider social environment. Thirdly, it accords challenging possibilities for the church to share the Good News and the joyfulness of its fellowship with others; here the liturgy becomes an instrument of dialogue with the larger community.⁴⁷ Fourthly, it provides an ideal occasion for joint services of several parishes or denominations. Lastly, open-air worship helps the church to strengthen its affinity to the nature and the environment.

⁴⁶ See above, Ch. 4, sec. 4.6.1.

⁴⁷ While discussing the need for Christian carnivals and festivals that will “force the congregation to move throughout their physical community,” Martin says that such an exposure will put the congregation “in vulnerable contact with the community,” which he thinks is essential for its effectiveness. See Chad Martin, “Carnival: A Theology of Laughter and a Ritual for Social Change,” *Worship* 73 (1999): 43-45.

Since a public venue belongs to the general public, planning and preparations must be undertaken sufficiently early to guarantee the full co-operation of the public and of the local authorities. At every stage of the planning, preparation and celebration of the Eucharist, the willing co-operation of the local community should be enlisted. Cordial invitations to participate in the event may be extended to local religious and political leaders and social activists. The celebration must be distinguished by the best of the church's traditions including piety, decorum, punctuality, austerity, and people's participation. The primary aim of the church in the public celebration of the Eucharist should be to bring glory to God and to foster peace and unity in the local community, not rivalry and mutual denigration.

Care must be taken to make non-members of the church feel welcome in the worship. Measures must be adopted to make the celebration an attractive and significant event for every one. The language of the liturgy must be simple, straightforward, yet dignified. Rituals and symbolic actions should be explained and made meaningful to the participants. Since partaking of the bread and the wine is restricted to confirmed members of the church, it is desirable to avoid their administration in a public celebration. Non-members of the church may be given sufficient participation. The inclusion of theatre activities in the worship will make this possible to a great extent. The members of the community will be happy to participate also by making offertories, by bringing prayer requests, and by joining in the *bhajans* and refrains. Their representatives may also bring their greetings and good wishes during the service. Where possible, the Eucharist may be followed by a fellowship meal.

The theme of the worship should be relevant to the life of the community. Indian music, and *bhajans* (prayer songs often repeated after a leader) accompanied by Indian musical instruments are preferred. The songs must be made meaningful to the audience in every way possible and must encourage the participation of non-members. They may include *bhajans* and other meaningful songs, which are related to the theme of the worship.

The liturgy given below is designed with the Kerala village open-air situation in mind. The worship begins with a procession from the church. The purpose is first of all to give the worship an atmosphere of celebration. Secondly, such procession can create an expectant atmosphere. Thirdly, processions can encourage large-scale participation in the event.

The theme of the worship is "Justice for Women;" the aim is to create a general awareness of the issue and to enable people to seek wisdom and strength from God to find liberation from

such evil.⁴⁸ There is scope for good lay participation in this order of worship. Lay members including women and youth should be encouraged to participate in the leading of prayers. This liturgy includes several prayers from the Indian tradition. A dramatic episode follows the preliminary prayers. It is an “anti-model” of Forum Theatre. The Forum Theatre session must be executed carefully. The “Joker” must keep the performance and the audience participation under control giving the theme the serious treatment it deserves.

The collect is from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. The Eucharistic Prayer is a meaningful version from *Bread of Tomorrow*. The Confession follows the Ministry of the Word of God, symbolising the conviction of sin effected by the Word of God. The affirmation of faith that follows is a simple and lucid statement. A symbolic gesture of self-dedication follows the prayer of Thanksgiving. It stresses the fact that the true offering is the offering of our own selves.

An Order of the Lord’s Supper for a public celebration

Theme: “**Justice for Women**”

Street Procession: The members of the congregation(s) taking part in the eucharistic service, including children, gather in the church for a brief prayer service. Then all join a joyful but orderly procession to the venue of the eucharistic celebration.

Preliminaries: Notices, welcome etc.

THE PREPARATION

Praise and adoration:

Songs and music (and/or a dance of adoration and praise where possible) contribute to an atmosphere of worship.

⁴⁸ A newspaper report quotes a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report, which claims that “more than 5,000 dowry deaths occur every year in India.” The report also mentions the evil tendency of “son preference” in Asian societies. It says, “Genetic testing for sex selection, though officially outlawed, has become a booming business in China, India and Korea.” See *The Hindu*, 23 July 1997 (Online edition).

P: Let us pray

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Or, the following prayer of adoration is said or sung):

P: O Lord, you are the splendour of the golden sun.

C: *Saranam, saranam, saranam.*⁴⁹

P: You are the loveliness of the silver moon.

C: *Saranam, saranam, saranam.*

P: You are the lustre of the gleaming stars.

C: *Saranam, saranam, saranam.*

P: You are all beauty.

C: *Saranam, saranam, saranam.*

P: You are all glorious.

C: *Saranam, saranam, saranam.*

P: O Lord, our God.

*Saranam, saranam, saranam.*⁵⁰

Or, another prayer of adoration may be used.

Hymn

Stories of the People

People tell their stories from their life and experiences. Stories may be chosen from the congregation as well as from the larger community outside including the international scene

A model story in dramatic form is given below. This is a Forum Theatre piece. Its purpose is to develop attitudes to resist domestic oppression and abuse of women.

⁴⁹ The word "saranam" means, "I take refuge."

“Life Sentence,”⁵¹

(The sitting room. Maji, a graceful old lady, is seated on an easy chair)

Maji: Janaki! Janaki, where is my coffee?

Janaki: (from inside) In a minute, Maji!

Maji: Oh, this headache! How many times have I told this girl to take charge of the household? I am too old. I cannot keep on worrying about these things. This is the time of life when one should go on pilgrimages to Benares and Badrinath.

(Janaki, a pale, tired-looking, shabbily dressed, unhappy woman in her early forties enters).

Janaki: Your coffee, Maji!

Maji: Thanks. Janaki, you look like an old hag already! Who'd believe you are my daughter-in-law! Look, from now on you must take charge of this household. I can no longer shoulder all these responsibilities. Here, take these keys.

Janaki: No, Maji. Sorry, I cannot take the keys.

Maji: What about them? They won't bite you. What is your problem? Don't give me silly excuses. I have heard them already.

Janaki: I am busy from morning to night, running after one thing or another in the house, cooking and washing and looking after the children. Besides I am so absent-minded. Maji, if you do not want to keep the keys, hand them to Masterji.

Maji: Oh, your Masterji! I have been hearing you call my son Masterji from the day you stepped into this house, and I still don't like it. He is your husband, not your master. I used to address my husband by name. Why can't you?

Janaki: God forbid! Isn't he the master?

Maji: Whose master? Just because he married you through compassion, you think he is your master. Your father was a respectable school teacher. The poor man did not make any money. So he couldn't pay the bridegroom the dowry he promised. My son went to your

⁵⁰ Adaptation of the poem, “Sloka,” by Devanesan, *The Infinite Christ*, 36.

⁵¹ This episode is based on Hajira Shakoor's Urdu short story, “Umr Qaid” (Life Sentence), trans. V. Kannabiran and R. Moosavi, in *Women Writing in India Vol. II*, eds. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita (New York: Pandora-HarperCollins, 1993) 570-579.

marriage as a guest and returned home as your husband. Because he has a good heart he rose to the occasion and saved the situation. And so you call him master?!

Janaki: Masterji is coming! I will get his coffee. (Sreenivas enters. Hands over his shawl and umbrella to Janaki who takes them and rushes inside).

Sreeni: (to Maji) Horrible day, isn't? The heat is terrible. It's so quiet here. Where have all the children gone?

Maji: Your sons are playing cricket at school. The others are inside.

Sreeni: So you didn't go to the temple this evening?

Maji: I was feeling very tired today. I can't go alone. And who will go with me? Your daughter is indisposed.

(Janaki enters gives Sreenivas coffee. She leaves immediately).

Sreeni: Why didn't you ask her to go with you?

Maji: Who, Janaki! Of all people! You are talking as if you've just met her. Have you ever seen her going out? And if she goes with me people will think she is the servant maid! Look at the rags she wears.

Sreeni: It is her pleasure. She always gives away new clothes and good saris to others, and she would rather go about in her tatters. I don't care about her clothes and looks. It is her duty as a daughter in-law to look after you. You know on the very day of marriage I told her, "Janaki, now that you have become the daughter in-law of my parents, you should never make them unhappy. For no reason should Maji or my brothers or sisters complain about anything. I expect you to behave sensibly."

Maji: Why do you say all this now? Has she ever offended even a small child in this house?

Sreeni: I am only saying that she must know her duties. By the way, where is my little sister, Munni?

Maji: Munni has gone out to visit her old college-mates.

Sreeni: Has she taken her kids also with her?

Maji: No, Janaki is looking after her kids. Even the baby is with Janaki. She will look after them. She doesn't complain. And she has no small kids now.

Sreeni: I am of course a small kid!

Maji: You are worse. You will never grow up.

Sreeni: (laughs. He calls out loudly). Janaki, I want hot water for my bath.

Janaki (enters. She coughs): The water is ready and you may take your bath now.

Maji: Janaki, you have a bad cough. I have been noticing it for the last month. Now it seems to have become worse. You look pale and feverish. You must take some medicine. If you fall sick who will mind the kitchen? Take care of yourself and don't let the small children catch your illness. They will have to travel home in two days.

Sreeni: That's true. Older people can afford to be sick, they may live or die. They've had their chance. But children have a future (He leaves).

Maji: What's more, if you are laid up, we will all suffer. You know Munni hates our firewood stoves. She is used to electric kitchens....

Janaki: I shall be careful, Maji. I will do all the cooking (Coughs. She finds it difficult to stop the coughing and gasps for breath. Maji does not even look at her. She pretends to sip her coffee. Janaki rushes inside).

Forum Theatre session follows

Hymn

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray

The Collect

Eternal Son and Word of God, spring of healings, you found the Samaritan woman by Jacob's well and asked her for water. What a wonder! He who is enthroned upon the cherubim speaks with a sinful woman. He who has set the earth upon the waters asks for water. He who pours forth fountains of waters asks her who was caught in the snares of the adversary for water that he may draw her to him. He who is merciful seeks to give living

water to her who is burning with sins. Therefore let us praise him. Loving Lord, glory to you! Amen.⁵²

Different members of the congregation may read one or more of the following lessons:

Old Testament lesson: Prov. 31:10-31

In lieu of Psalm: Lk. 1: 46-55

Epistle Lesson: Eph. 5:21-33

The Gospel lesson: Jn. 4:27-30, 39-42

Exposition of the Word of God

In a brief message the presbyter (or a lay person) may draw attention to the biblical understanding of the place of women in the society especially in the face of the issues raised by the dramatic presentation. The message must raise questions rather than furnish answers. There is also scope for brief presentations on the theme by two or three lay persons including women in a suitable order. It is desirable that the presentations include testimonies of personal experience.

The Confession

P: In the light of the Word of God, let us confess our sins to God and plead for God's mercy and forgiveness:

Lord, forgive our apathy to the suffering of women in our society. Forgive our blindness, our hardness of heart, and our lack of compassion we confess our lack of appreciation for the loving care and sacrificial service that we receive from the members of our family, particularly from sisters, mothers, wives, and daughters.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: We confess that we have not done anything to alleviate their pain or to lighten their burdens. Often we have been harsh and unkind in our words and actions. By our selfishness and pride, we have caused them pain and distress rather than consolation and comfort. We confess our part in their misery and our share in the injustice meted out to them.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: O God of justice, we tend to forget that you are a God who listens to the prayers of the oppressed and vindicates the orphans and the widows, the poor and the despised. We have

⁵² 'Adapted Vesper Hymns, Sunday of the Samaritan woman,' in *Let Us Pray to the Lord: A Collection of Prayers from the Eastern and Oriental Traditions*, ed. George Lemopoulos (Geneva: WCC, 1996) 20.

overlooked your justice that brings down rulers and lifts up the humble, your righteousness that feeds the hungry and sends the rich empty away.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: Forgive our failure to empower the oppressed and to enable them to find liberation. Forgive our lethargy to use our positions of privilege to fight their oppressors. As members of religious bodies we confess our failure to resist the abuse, subjugation and violation of women in our society. Forgive our sins and the sins of our society, through Christ our Lord.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: May Christ the Great Physician soothe our wounds with the compassion of his heart. May he, by his death on the cross, his victory at the resurrection, and his intercession on our behalf, bring us the healing and peace of God. May he set us free to practise his justice in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

C: *Amen. Thanks be to God.*

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

The Creed

The Nicene Creed or the following affirmation of faith may be used. The latter may be set to music and sung together, or said with a musical refrain in which everyone could join in:

P: Let us confess our faith:

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God

Who has created and is creating.

C: *We are not alone,*

We live in God's world,

We believe in God.

P: God has come in Jesus,

The Word made flesh,

To reconcile and make new.

He works in us and others

By the Spirit.

C: *We are not alone,*

We live in God's world,

We believe in God.

P: We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

To celebrate God's presence,

To love and serve others,

To seek justice and resist evil,

To proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,

Our judge and our hope.

C: *We are not alone,*

We live in God's world,

We believe in God.

P: In life, in death, in life beyond death,

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

C: *We are not alone,*

We live in God's world,

*We believe in God.*⁵³

Hymn

Intercessory prayers

A lay person may lead the intercession using the following litany. Additional prayers or biddings mentioning names of people in need may be included. Alternatively, the presbyter may call upon two or three participants to pray in their own words. It is desirable to intersperse the prayers and the biddings by a moving refrain in which everyone can take part.

P: Let us pray:

Leader: Christ, your body was broken on the cross; we pray now for those who suffer in body, mind, and spirit, for those unable to find a cure for their illness, or relief for their pain. May they know the courage and comfort of being loved. Touch them with your love and through us we pray. Lord, in your mercy:

⁵³ Adaptation of "A New Creed," United Church of Canada, *All Year Round*, British Council of Churches, 1988. See *Bread of Tomorrow*, 140-141.

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: For women whose bodies are broken and abused, the survivors of domestic violence and assault, for all who have been betrayed or victimised; may they be set free to share a loving touch. Lord, in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: For children and adults who are starving, homeless, and sick, or disabled; for all those who feel alienated from their own bodies and doubt that they are made in the image of God; touch them with your reassuring love. Lord in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*⁵⁴

Leader: We remember the dignity of women affirmed by Jesus. We pray for all who suffer especially because they are women; for all victims of violence and harassment; those exploited as cheap labour; those forced to sell their bodies; those whose gifts remain unused; those who constantly find themselves demeaned by the assumption that they have no ideas worth considering, and no purpose save to serve men.⁵⁵ Lord in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: We pray for mothers weary with the demands of young families; for those who give themselves unnoticed to the care of elderly relatives; for those who carry the burden of what their men have done; for those now lost without the one person who gave them laughter and security and meaning.⁵⁶ May they know that they are of value to you, and find themselves refreshed by the living water which comes from Christ himself. Lord in your mercy:

C: *Hear our prayer.*

Leader: We pray for this town (village) and all those who live in this town (village) or pass through this place. We ask you to make this an area of peace where people of different religions and communities may live together in peace and mutual co-operation. Bless all our

⁵⁴ Biddings (slightly adapted) from Catherine Ogle, "Daily Service: 7 May 1996," in *The Daily Service Prayer Book*, 36-37.

⁵⁵ Bidding from Roy Jenkins, *The Daily Service Prayer Book*, 172.

⁵⁶ Roy Jenkins, *ibid.*

leaders and rulers and all those who serve our society in various positions. Heal the sick, comfort the broken-hearted, and satisfy all those who hunger and thirst for justice. Help your church to be a channel of your grace. In Jesus' name we ask all these things.

C: *Hear our prayer.*

The concluding part of the intercession is the following prayer,⁵⁷ which is said or sung responsively:

L: Let us pray for our nations and for our world:

Voice: Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

C: Into that heaven of freedom, our Father, let our country awake.

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

C: Into that heaven of freedom, our Father, let our country awake.

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

C: Into that heaven of freedom, our Father, let our country awake.

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action;

C: Into that heaven of freedom, our Father, let our country awake.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Hymn

The Peace

P: The peace of God be with you all.

C: And also with you.

All those who are present hold hands while the following blessing is being sung or said:

⁵⁷ From Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (London: MacMillan, 1919) 27. Slightly adapted.

May there be peace in the highest heavens; may there be peace in the firmament; may there be peace on earth. May the waters flow peacefully; may the herbs and plants grow peacefully; may all the divine powers bring us to peace. The supreme Lord is peace. May we all be in peace, peace and only peace; and may that peace come to each one of us.⁵⁸ Through Christ our Lord, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

P: Let us give thanks.

C: *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

P: ⁵⁹ O Holy Wisdom of our God, eternally challenging to our wisdom, and compassionate toward our weakness, we praise you and give you thanks, because you emptied yourself of power and entered our struggle, taking upon yourself our unprotected flesh. You opened wide your arms for us upon the cross, becoming scandal for us, that you might sanctify even the grave to be a bed of hope to your people. And now we give thanks that you sent your life-giving Spirit upon your church: that by his glorious power the joy of the everlasting Gospel might run through all the world; and a new birth of holiness, new understandings of truth, and a new unity in love possess all nations.

Therefore, with those who are detained without justice, abandoned or betrayed by friends, whose bodies are violated or in pain; with those who have died alone without dignity, comfort or hope; and with all the company of saints who have carried you in their wounds that they may be bodied forth with life, we praise you, saying:

C: *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

⁵⁸ "A prayer from the *Vedas*." See Angela Tilby, "Act of Worship: 10 January 1997," *The Daily Service Prayer Book*, 46.

⁵⁹ The Eucharistic Prayer, which intermingles God's story with human stories, is an adapted version (adapted by Duncan B. Forrester for use in New College, Edinburgh) of "Eucharistic Prayer for Today" by Janet Morley, *Bread of Tomorrow*, 86-87.

P: Blessed is our brother Jesus, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, from whom the cup of suffering did not pass; who on the night that he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me.’ In the same way he took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, to remember me.’

C: *Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again!*

P: Therefore as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are proclaiming Christ’s death until he comes. In the body broken and the blood poured out, we restore to memory and hope the broken and unremembered victims of tyranny and sin; and we long for the bread of tomorrow, and the wine of the age to come. Come then, life-giving Spirit of our God, brood over these bodily things to make them holy, and make us one body with Christ, that we, who are baptised into his death, may walk in newness of life; that what is sown in dishonour may be raised in glory, and what is sown in weakness may be raised in power.

C: *Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, be all honour and glory to you, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

Silence

P: Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour gave us:

All: *Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

The presbyter breaks the bread, saying:

When we break the bread, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

*The presbyters and the servers receive the bread and the wine.*⁶⁰

During this time these words may be said or sung:

⁶⁰ It is wise to avoid the administration of communion in a public celebration like this, since, if the communion is administered to church members alone, outsiders may mistake it as discriminatory

O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, give us your peace.

Hymn

Thanksgiving and self dedication

P: We thank you, heavenly Father, for the presence of Jesus Christ with us now. He has revealed his glory in the breaking of the bread, which is his own body. He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is the grain of wheat sown on the ground, the source of new life for all. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for many. He is the Resurrection and the Life who has opened for us a new and living way to your throne of grace and to your Kingdom. Help us to follow him everyday as we love and serve our brothers and sisters in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

P: In response to God's love and mercy shown to us in Jesus Christ, let us dedicate ourselves to him.

All the participants stand outside the borderline of a large cross marked on the ground, so that the inner space of the gathering is cruciform. Either the foot or the head of the cross should be close to the Lord's Table. People on the right repeat the words of the presbyter on the right and the people on the left repeat the words of the presbyter on the left.

Presbyter on the right (loudly): What will you, what will you do, what will you do, to show your love to Christ, who gave his life for you? What will you do to show your love to Christ who gave his life for you?

People on the right loudly repeat the words asking the question to the people on the left.

Presbyter on the left (loudly): I will deny myself, I will deny myself, I will deny myself, take up his cross, and follow him. I will deny myself, take up his cross, and follow him.

People on the left repeat the answer to the people on the right.

gesture. Therefore the administration of communion may be restricted to a token gesture with the worship leaders at the table alone receiving the elements.

Now the presbyter on the left asks the above-mentioned question to the people on the left. They repeat the question to the people on the right who, in turn, repeat the above-mentioned answer.

Lastly the presbyters address the question to the whole congregation as loudly as possible. The congregation reply at the top of their voice.

Benediction

L: O God, send us now in peace. Help us to hold fast to that which is good. Help us to return no evil for evil. Help us to support the faint-hearted, to uphold the weak and to honour all people. And may the blessing of God, who creates, redeems and sanctifies all life, be with us all.⁶¹

C: *Amen.*

Expression of thanks to the community for its co-operation and help. Response by one or two members of the community also is in order.

Recession: After the worship the participating church members and others join a procession to the church (with lighted candles, if night has fallen.)

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5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a sketch of the People's Eucharist. The salient features of this form of liturgy were explained with the help of model liturgies. Practical details of planning, formulating and celebrating the Eucharist are dealt with in Appendix C.

In the People's Eucharist, the celebration of the Lord's Supper will be enriched by the skills, talents and gifts of every member of the congregation and the full patronage and co-operation of the clergy and other church personnel. This liturgy enables the church to bring to the altar of God all the wealth of the cultural and spiritual resources of the community and of the church. Drama and the performing arts make up one set of such resources. All these are pooled together to make the worship of the living God a dialogical, participatory,

⁶¹ Benediction taken from "Every Branch That Bears Fruit is Pruned," *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 52.

enlightening, and liberative experience, not only for the church but also for the whole community.

People's Eucharist is a highly participatory form of worship. It enables the church and its members to respond to God's activity in Christ by opening their lives up to the inspiration of the Spirit of God. It motivates the worshippers to respond to the covenant of God in repentance, faith and obedience. The church is a lively community of a pilgrim people looking forward to the consummation of God's Kingdom; in the course of their onward journey, People's Eucharist becomes a challenging exercise in following Christ. Christ leads the church on the paths of his mission to people who suffer and face torture and death at the hands of an unjust world. People's Eucharist reminds the church of its calling to live in constant companionship with Jesus Christ and with a strong sense of solidarity with the suffering ones of the world.

CONCLUSION

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

--1 Cor. 11:26

The present research is focused on People's Eucharist, which is a liturgical alternative that interprets, elaborates and diversifies the traditional liturgy; it stretches the liturgy to its limits in the interests of the participation of ordinary members of the congregation. It takes shape when the scope of the church's traditional worship is enlarged and enriched so as to encompass the needs, problems and aspirations of the worshippers. It happens when they weave their stories and insights into the matrix of the liturgy. People's Eucharist represents people's prayer for transformation and liberation in response to God's redemption of the world in Christ. It voices stories and insights of ordinary men and women in their own idiom and culturally conditioned expressions. It is a liturgical alternative that promises to liberate the church's worship from its bondage to jargon, tradition, clericalism, and ritualism. People's Eucharist evolves from a rediscovery of the central role of the laity in the life of the church, a renewed vision of the church's missionary task, and a positive interaction with People's Theatre, which is an effective tool for social education.

This research was prompted by a pastoral concern and quest for a methodology to revitalise the liturgical life of the parishes belonging to the Church of South India in Kerala State, India. It was argued in this thesis that the present eucharistic liturgies of the Church of South India fail to enable the worshippers to rise beyond the limits of private religious experience. They fall short of equipping local congregations to bear witness to the values of the Kingdom of God and to engage in efforts for justice, peace and reconciliation in the society. The church's liturgy fails to promote the renewal of its witness and mission. The liturgy of the CSI leaves much to be desired as an Indian liturgy that responds to the country's cultural and religious heritage. The need for liturgical renewal was expressed in the face of the fissures that are fast developing into yawning gaps on the apparently nonchalant and complacent exterior of the church's life. Religion is becoming increasingly detached from

the daily life of the worshippers. At present the eucharistic worship serves only to bring out the difference in the roles and status of the clergy who dominate the worship, *vis-à-vis* that of the laity who play an apparently passive and innocuous part. In other words, the present liturgy falls short of fostering the ministries of the laity. It fails to challenge evil and unjust practices in the church and the society. An insensitive ritual entrapped in unbending traditions, it benumbs rather than provokes human conscience. It papers over disunity and inequalities within the church rather than poses challenge to them. Instead of being an effective means of proclaiming Christ till he comes, eucharistic worship has become an esoteric ritual that conceals the truth of the Gospel from outsiders. The liturgy has distanced the church from its non-Christian neighbours who do not find their concerns and aspirations reflected in the church's prayers.

The survey conducted among the communicant members of select parishes in the four dioceses showed that the CSI liturgy has definitely promoted unity in the Kerala dioceses. But beyond that the liturgy has achieved precious little, especially with regard to engendering healthy lay involvement in worship. There is a widespread lethargy in the area of the church's mission. After decades of acquaintance with the same liturgy, many have become blind to its weaknesses. But there are a few who seek reform. This in brief is the background that has prompted this search and investigation for a viable means for the renewal of the liturgical life of the CSI dioceses in Kerala.

It was emphasised in the first part of this thesis that the Eucharist is the central act of the church's worship by which the church responds to God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God makes salvation a present and personal experience. The Eucharist is a channel of grace enabling the church to respond in faith to God's gift of salvation. It becomes a sacrament of unity as the members of the worshipping community severally and jointly experience God's liberating and transforming love and find their place as members of the body of Christ. This salvation experience is continually renewed in an atmosphere of lively worship where every one is able to participate freely, actively and wholeheartedly.

The place and the role of the liturgy were also discussed. A distinction was made between the liturgy and the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the church's free response to God's free gift of salvation. The liturgy on the other hand is the structure of the eucharistic worship and a physical component of the sacrament. If liturgy is the form, the Eucharist is the content.

The liturgy should be designed in such a way as to facilitate the wholehearted celebration of the Eucharist by the whole congregation. Its purpose should not be vitiated by the professionalism of the clergy or the domination of any other section of the church. The Eucharist is the very heart of Christian worship. It is the conscience of the Church, its active and sensitive mind that responds to the call of God and the challenges of the world. Similarly, the liturgy is a means of the church's self-expression that should not be obfuscated by restrictive tradition or rigid ritualisation. On the other hand, the liturgical format should be an expedient and creative means for the people of God to encounter their saving God in the Eucharist and to bear witness to his goodness in the free and affable ambience of Christian fellowship.

The Eucharist, dramatic by nature, unfolds the story of God's salvation. When the people of God participate in that dramatic action, the story of God's salvation and the stories of the people intermingle. Thus people and their stories receive meaning and orientation. It was argued that the celebration of the Eucharist loses its significance when the laity who compose the overwhelming majority of the church's membership are relegated to a lower status and assigned a passive role in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is a historical distortion, which is carried on to this day. Therefore it was maintained that the whole church, the clergy and the laity together, should celebrate the Eucharist and bring the whole of the church's life to God and be transformed.

The affinity of the Eucharist to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which is founded on divine justice, was stressed. Every celebration of the Eucharist is a proclamation, a ritual anticipation and an impassioned plea to God for the fulfilment of his Kingdom. It is an expression of solidarity with the poor, oppressed and suffering millions of this world. The church's proclamation of the Kingdom in the Eucharist is a moral judgement upon itself and upon the world. It is at the same time a call for repentance and renewal.

It was argued that the People's Theatre is a viable means for liturgical renewal. People's Theatre, which is an educational and political theatre, widely influential in the Third World, is distinguished for its effectiveness as a means of social communication and change at the grassroots level. It was further suggested that theatre is not alien to the church or its worship. The Bible recognises the communicational effectiveness of symbolic and dramatic communication and makes good use of them in its narrative. It was shown with particular

attention to the Fourth Gospel that dramatic communication had a central role in Jesus' public ministry.

It was further emphasised that the pervasive influence of the People's Theatre in the Third World especially in India and in Kerala is a proof of its effectiveness as a means of social change and of its cultural adaptability. Its theoretical background was traced to the contributions of Brecht, Freire and Boal with a view to examining its pedagogic, artistic, and organisational merits. This was followed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of People's Theatre in order to decide on its appropriateness as a means of liturgical renewal. The resources that were of relevance to liturgical renewal were identified.

People's Eucharist has been projected as an amplified form of the traditional liturgy; it is designed with insights and resources culled from the People's Theatre. The main resources from the People's Theatre that has contributed to the development of the People's Eucharist are the following: active participation of the people, stress on transformation and liberation, narrative format, dramatic structure, didactic focus, and cultural appropriateness. It was contended that these aspects could bring about the much-needed change in the church's worship. When the Eucharist becomes a total response of the whole church, it becomes also a transforming and liberating experience governed by the Spirit of God. When people bring their stories and their testimonies to God and to one another, their lives are accepted, transformed and incorporated into the body of Christ. In the sharing sessions and intercessions, they remember the concerns of the whole world and not just those of the church. In this way, the Eucharist recovers its nature as a sacrament of reconciliation for the whole world. Worship becomes a learning experience and a springboard for the church's mission and witness.

In the last chapter of this thesis, the shape of the People's Eucharist was demonstrated with the help of model liturgies, in order to assert that it is worthwhile to borrow resources from the People's Theatre for the revitalisation of the Eucharist in CSI, Kerala. It was made clear while introducing the model liturgies that they were no more than examples of People's Eucharist. For, People's Eucharist can be evolved only by people out of their involvement in the life of the local congregations and their real-life ordeals of suffering and their personal experience of God's salvation. People's Eucharist is not to be compared with traditional liturgies, which are couched in terse phrases and crisp enunciations of timeless truths. Such

liturgies may be literary classics or museum pieces, formulated, promulgated, and preserved for use in any part of the church in any age, without reference to the social or cultural milieu of the congregations. People's Eucharist, on the other hand, implies people-centred and localised re-formulations of the liturgy, which are not be timeless but timely; not universal but contextual.

It is hoped that the People's Eucharist will, in course of time, be adopted by the parishes and the dioceses of the Church of South India in Kerala as the format of their regular Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist. A scheme for the implementation of the same is given in Appendix C. It is a cautious procedure that is sensitive to feedback from the dioceses, both positive and negative; moreover it seeks to enlist both the participation of the people and the co-operation of the ecclesiastical structures in its implementation.

The methodology of the People's Eucharist has been put forward as a solution for the present ills of worship in the Church of South India. This proposal is based on several factors: on the author's personal experiences as a presbyter and theological teacher in the Church of South India, on the field work done in select parishes, on positive feedback received from the use of the People's Eucharist (in a rudimentary form) in the worship of a theological seminary in Kerala, and on library research. It has to be admitted that a model of liturgy developed in this way has to stand the test of time by being widely used in the Kerala dioceses over a period.

This research was limited to the renewal of the eucharistic liturgy of the Church of South India. It is necessary that further studies and efforts be undertaken to reform of other orders of worship. Moreover, this study was confined to the CSI dioceses in the state of Kerala. As it was observed earlier, the church in Kerala has a different history and cultural environment compared with those of the church in other states. Therefore it is proposed that studies for liturgical renewal in other parts of the CSI in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka be conducted to discover appropriate means for liturgical renewal in those regions.

While this research focused on the liturgy of the CSI, most of the criticisms and the suggestions that have been made about the CSI liturgy may prove to be equally pertinent to the liturgies of other churches as well. Therefore the methodology of People's Eucharist, which demands liturgical elaboration with the full involvement of the local congregation and

the employment of local cultural and religious resources, may be found appropriate to the liturgies of other churches as well.

People's Eucharist is the amplification or interpretation of the traditional liturgy. Its purpose is to involve the whole congregation in the liturgical action. Its broader vision is to bring the pain, sorrows, and concerns of the whole world into the liberating and transforming presence of the crucified and risen Christ. For, in the Eucharist, God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit enters into communion with the world he has created and is re-creating. God meets his people in the little fellowship around the Lord's table. People's Eucharist envisages the coming Kingdom of God where people of every age, nation, caste, and tongue will be brought together into one fellowship, where justice and peace will reign and God's name will be glorified for ever and ever.

Appendix A
Sharing Experiences of the Eucharist:
Questionnaire for Interviews

Context: *Are you satisfied with the appearance and the physical arrangements of the place of worship?*

What did the physical context of the celebration mean to you: the architecture of the place of worship, the place of the altar, lectern, communion railings, the seating of the ministers, the choir, the congregation, etc.? Do you suggest any changes in the physical arrangements of the place of worship?

Source: *Who is the celebrant of the Eucharist?*

What was the role of the minister(s)? What was the role of the congregation? What was your own role? How will you describe the regular communicants of your parish? What is their social (incl. caste), economic, political, and spiritual background?

Do you think that a more active participation of the congregation in the celebration of the Eucharist is desirable or possible? Do you desire a more active role for yourself?

Message: *What message did you get at the Eucharist? What other blessings?*

Was there a theme for the service? If yes, what was it? Was it sufficiently clear? Did you receive any special insight apart from the explicit message? If yes, what was it?

Channel: *What are your comments on the format of the eucharistic service?*

Was the liturgy familiar to you? What was the place of the prayer book (the Book of Common Worship)? What do you feel about the language of the Eucharist in the BCW? What is your favourite prayer in the service of the Eucharist? What is the place of music, gestures, etc. in worship?

Receiver: *What does the Eucharist mean to you? How do you approach the Eucharist?*

Are you a regular communicant? How do you prepare for the Eucharist?

Effect: *What is the impact of the Eucharist on you, on your congregation, and on the society at large?*

After celebrating the Eucharist for so many years do you see any changes in the life of your congregation?

Do you want to add anything else?

Appendix B

A REPORT OF THE INTERVIEWS ON THE PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF THE EUCHARIST IN THE FOUR CSI DIOCESES OF KERALA

This is a short report of the interviews that were conducted between December 1997 and April 1998 in a selected parish in each of the four Kerala dioceses of the CSI (It appears in summary form in Chapter 2).

A. The Eucharist and the people: responses from CSI Church, Kannammoola, South Kerala Diocese

Among the ten respondents, three belonged to the Dalit background. There were two youths and two women. Five were members of the church committee.

CONTEXT

*Are you satisfied with the appearance and the physical arrangements of the place of worship?*¹

There was general satisfaction about the physical arrangements of the place of worship.

SOURCE

Who is the celebrant of the Eucharist?

One said that Christ is the celebrant of the Eucharist; the presbyter and the congregation assist him. He believed that all participants in the Eucharist are equal before God.

The rest shared the view that the presbyter is the celebrant and that the congregation plays a vital part in the celebration by their participation. One said he was not aware that the congregation has any priestly prerogatives. One said that it is the presbyter who is authorised by church to lead the Eucharist; he believed that the role of the congregation at

¹ In this and in the other reports of the interviews that follow, the supplementary questions have been left out to save space.

best is a supportive one. He felt that the congregation was playing that role well in the church.

How will you describe the communicants of your parish?

One informed that there are about 120 communicant members in this parish. Of these some thirty are either out of station, ailing, or disabled. Regular communicants belong to all social and economic categories. The youth are fairly regular communicants. Those who are irregular at the communion belong to the 35-60 age group. The majority of the women are regular communicants.

What are your comments about the degree of participation of the laity?

One person pointed out that the lay people including the youth are given opportunities to read the lessons and to lead the intercession during all church services. He was satisfied with the degree of lay participation. But one young person felt that it was desirable to have more active involvement of the laity in worship; he himself would like to preach in the church once in a while. He felt that women should be given a more active role in worship. Another person was of the opinion that non-communicants should not leave before the Breaking of the Bread. He wanted the children also to stay, as it will help them to become familiar with the Eucharist and its message.

MESSAGE

What message did you get at the Eucharist? What other blessings?

One respondent was sad that the preacher at the Eucharist who had preached on the church's responsibility to the poor had not really applied the message to the Eucharist. Therefore the Breaking of the Bread stood as an independent part of the whole service which in turn did not seem to have a theme for itself. Another person said he was moved by the Sermon. Yet another person mentioned the theme of the Sermon as something that was appealing to him. A young person said that he was challenged by the Sermon to experience his own solidarity with the whole people of God.

CHANNEL

What are your comments on the format of the eucharistic service?

One said that he did not have any complaints about the language of the Liturgy; in fact, he did not think that the language mattered at all. He was of the opinion that the minister leading the liturgy was able to sustain an atmosphere of piety. Another person said that he was very familiar with the *Order of the Holy Eucharist* and expressed satisfaction with its format. A church committee member also expressed his satisfaction with the present Liturgy; but he felt that the elements of adoration and confession needed elaboration. He wondered whether the Prayer of Humble Access, which was a meaningful prayer for him, could be made even more touching. Another wanted the Intercession to be made more elaborate and comprehensive.

RECEIVER

What does the Eucharist mean to you? How do you approach the Eucharist?

One said that the Eucharist was a means of personal renewal for him. He believed that, being a channel of spiritual insight and energy, it had implications for his social and spiritual life. He always would prepare himself for the Eucharist by fasting on Sunday mornings and by spending some time on self-examination. On those occasions he would always feel challenged to mend his broken personal relationships within his family and outside; he would stay away from receiving communion if he thought he was unprepared to take part in the communion.

Another, in his sixties, said that his personal preparation consisted of private devotions. He has a habit of wearing white clothes to church on communion Sundays; this practice has been in existence among the older members of the parish for many years.

Another stated his belief that when one received Communion one received Christ himself. It always brought about a closer fellowship with God and an experience of peace and strength within, and better relationships with one's fellow-beings. He found the preparatory service in the church on Friday evenings particularly helpful.

Another respondent said that the Eucharist always challenged him to examine his personal relationship with God. It was a time for receiving personal sanctification. He said that during the Eucharist when he knelt at the altar he saw before his mind's eye the image of the crucified Christ wearing the crown of thorns. He was convinced that if he confessed his sins to God and meditated upon the suffering, the shedding of the blood, the sacrifice, and the love of Christ, he would receive peace of mind and serenity. He confessed that while he was overruled by this desire he would scarcely think of other worshippers.

A young person said that he received from worship in general and the Eucharist in particular release from problems in his personal life, peace of mind and divine blessings. By way of preparation he and his family members would remember the Eucharist in family prayers on the previous night and in the morning of the Eucharist.

EFFECT

What is the impact of the Eucharist on your life, on your congregation, and on the society at large?

One said that the Eucharist was a symbolic means of receiving pardon and remission of sins, and healing from God. It was a source of a spiritual rejuvenation for him. He said that he always left the worship refreshed and strengthened. As for the implications of the Eucharist for the society he confessed that he had not given much thought to that aspect. Another said that no celebration of the Eucharist failed to touch his heart; it always led him to a fresh dedication of his life to God. He believed that the eucharistic experience moulded the church into a fellowship of believers. As for the outsiders he was confident that they respected the church as a place of worship where God was present. Yet another person said that the great benefit of the Eucharist was that it amalgamated different individuals and classes of people into one fellowship. One respondent stated he did not know of any implications that the Eucharist had for people outside the church.

**B. The Eucharist and the people: Responses from St Thomas' Church, Kallely,
CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese**

Of the ten members who were interviewed, two were young university students. There were two couples. Two were widows. Three were members of the church committee. One was a non-communicant.

CONTEXT:

Are you satisfied with the appearance and the physical arrangements of the place of worship?

A senior member of the church committee was rather surprised at the question. He said that he had never paid any attention to this aspect and did not consider it an important factor at all; any way he had no complaint about it and he had never heard anyone else complaining either. Another senior church committee member was also of the opinion that the physical factors do not count at all in worship; neither the furniture nor the vestments played any significant role in worship at all. It is the spiritual attitude of the ministers, and not their attire, which count. "Let the ministers be clad with God's righteousness; let them be God-fearing, truthful and just," he said. Another respondent also considered the physical aspects as of little consequence. On the whole, there was satisfaction with the physical arrangements of the place of worship. But one young person suggested that if the altar rails were semicircular in shape, the communicants would be able to recognise the presence of others taking part and this could promote the sense of fellowship and unity in worship.

SOURCE:

Who is the celebrant of the Eucharist?

One senior member said that God himself is the celebrant; the ministers and the congregation join in the action of God. Another said that the worshipping body of the church including the ministers and the congregation are involved in the celebration. According to him the members of the congregation share in the priestly function of the ministers by virtue of their status in Christ as a "royal priesthood." Other respondents also agreed that the congregation has a vital role to play in the celebration of the Eucharist.

How will you describe the communicants of your parish?

According to a member of the church committee, the body of regular communicants belonged to the middle class; there are only three or four poor families in the whole congregation. Many young people are regular and active communicants.

What are your comments on the degree of participation of the laity?

There was general satisfaction with the degree of lay participation. All were pleased about the roles given to young people to read the lessons and to collect the offertory in the place of the church committee members. But one woman was of the opinion that such responsibilities must be given only to the serious-minded young people. She said that when the present minister had consulted the congregation as to whether the young people also might join the offertory procession and bring forward the communion elements she had objected on the same ground. She was pleased that the minister did not press his suggestion.

MESSAGE:

What message did you get at the Eucharist? What other blessings?

One person summarised the message of that Sunday's sermon as "faith without works is useless." Another said that it called for obedience to the Word of God in everyday life. Another said that the sermon emphasized the importance of matching one's words with conduct. Yet another said that the sermon challenged her to self-examination.

CHANNEL:

What are your comments on the format of the eucharistic service?

One woman said that she was in the habit of following the worship with the help of the prayer book; she did not find the language of *The Book of Common Worship* difficult or disturbing. Another person referred to the language as "fine." When asked to elaborate she said that it was simple for anyone to understand. A young person said he always paid attention to the words of the liturgy and said the responses promptly. At the same time he would concentrate on praying to God by himself. He said that the order of the CSI

eucharistic service was helpful and did not pose any barriers to his personal devotions during the service.

A respondent wanted more prayers in the liturgy emphasising penitence. A married couple felt that the liturgy lacked a proper preparatory rite of confession. They also felt that the Intercession was not comprehensive enough and needed to be strengthened. Another person also emphasised the need for an elaborate form of Intercession.

For one person the Sermon and the Intercession were the most important elements of the liturgy. For another the Breaking of the Bread (the Fraction) was the most touching part of the liturgy. For yet another, the Prayer of Humble Access was a favourite prayer. For another woman, the Prayer of Humble Access and the Prayer of Confession were favourites. One person mentioned the moment of the reception of the communion as the most important part of the Eucharist.

RECEIVER:

What does the Eucharist mean to you? How do you approach the Eucharist?

One of the respondents said that the service was a source of spiritual strength for him and that he had the habit of prayerfully preparing himself for the Eucharist. A young man said he always reached the church mentally prepared to take part in the Eucharist. A married couple mentioned that they always mentally and spiritually prepared themselves to take part in communion and would stay away from it if unprepared. Another married couple said that they prepared themselves as a family for the communion service with fasting and prayer. They mentioned that the Eucharist always helped them to begin afresh life in the new week. They said that during the Eucharist they found themselves very close to God. An elderly woman mentioned that she would always go to church services wearing freshly laundered clothes. She emphasized that the Eucharist did not benefit anyone who was not physically and spiritually prepared to participate in it. Another woman also emphasized the factor of personal preparation. She said she is in the habit of preparing herself during the two days prior to the Eucharist. She believed that the Eucharist brought a cleansing to her life. A young person mentioned renewal and sanctification as the personal benefits of the Eucharist in his life. He said he would always seek forgiveness of sins from God as part of his personal preparation for the Eucharist.

EFFECT:

What is the impact of the Eucharist on your life, on your congregation, and on the society at large?

One respondent said that the Eucharist helped in the building up his spiritual life as well as in the ordering of his social life. A married couple remarked that the Eucharist has a definite role in maintaining unity and fellowship in the congregation. One person said, "Our common life in this parish depends on our communion in the Eucharist." One woman was of the view that the benefits of the Eucharist is experienced by the wider community outside the church as a result of positive changes in the character and conduct of individual members of the congregation. Another woman said that the visible unity in the worshipping community is a challenge to the outsiders. A young person stated that the church's prayer for the world was part of the church's service for the world.

The Case of a non-communicant:

The interviewer came across a *regular* churchgoer and a member of the Kallely CSI Church who is a non-communicant. He is a former factory worker, presently unemployed. He is aged 52. According to his own report, he has never received communion since the day of his confirmation some 35 years ago. During the interview he gave several reasons for his staying away from communion. Although they included self-contradictory views, he seemed to be serious and sincere. His objections in his words were the following:

"The Eucharist is too holy; I am not worthy to take part in it."

"Those who take part in the Eucharist in our church are also unworthy; I don't want to associate with them."

"I don't believe that the bread and the wine turn into the body and the blood of Christ."

"The Bible says that those who took part in the Lord's Supper unworthily in the Corinthian church fell sick or died; so being unworthy I should not receive communion."

"Satan entered Judas when he partook of the sop that Jesus offered. So regular communion cannot prevent one's damnation."

He said that his favourite prayer in the order of the Eucharist is the Prayer for Purity. His own prayer to God was this: "Lord, restore me!"

C. The Eucharist and the people: Responses from St George's, Pallikkunnu, CSI East Kerala Diocese

Of the ten members of the congregation interviewed, three people were under the age of 30 and three were women. Four of the respondents had university education. Five were employed. One was a former Catholic. Four were Tamil speaking. Four were Dalit Christians, one a tribal Christian; three members of the parish committee; and one a diocesan council member. One of the respondents, a young male student confessed that he has not received communion at the church for quite some time. He did not feel at home in the church and found the liturgical worship too restrictive. On the other hand, he enthusiastically participated in the activities of an "evangelical" prayer fellowship.

CONTEXT:

Are you satisfied with the appearance and the physical arrangements of the place of worship?

All the respondents were satisfied with the present arrangements of the place of worship; no one could think of any alternatives nor had any suggestions for change.

SOURCE:

Who is the celebrant of the Eucharist?

Various responses:

"God is the central figure of the Eucharist being the giver of all spiritual gifts."

"God is the celebrant. The minister represents Christ at the Eucharist."

"Christ is the celebrant. The minister and the congregation have their roles." "The minister is the celebrant."

“Not the congregation. The members of the congregation are just receivers of the spiritual blessings. There is no scope for more participation.”

“The members of the congregation have an important role which they will be able to exercise if they are prayerful.”

“The congregation has a priestly role being the ‘royal priesthood.’”

“I am satisfied with the present degree of congregational participation. I am pleased that today I was given a chance to say an intercessory prayer.”

How will you describe the communicants of your parish?

It was indicated that the communicants form the cross-section of a congregation where the majority belongs to the working class. They are Tamil immigrant labourers in the tea estates; they are a hard working and earnest believers. There are many new Christians among them. The average monthly income of a plantation worker is just Rs. 2,000. About fifteen percent of the congregation might be considered rich; they are mostly Malayalee planters, professionals, and business people.

What are your comments on the degree of participation of the laity?

Two of the respondents were of the opinion that a more active role is desirable for the congregation especially in preaching and sharing of the Word of God. Two others expressed satisfaction with the present degree of participation; one recalled that on the previous Sunday he was able to say a prayer during the intercessory part of the Eucharist.

MESSAGE:

What message did you get from the Eucharist? What other blessings?

Different responses:

“Forgiveness and divine blessings.”

“New life and strength and courage to live like a Christian in my place of work.”

“The experience that God is a healer who listens to our prayers.”

“Today at the Eucharist, I experienced healing and release from the mental tension I was having.”

“Healing and salvation. Strength to be a witness.”

“Christ died for me; I must therefore surrender myself to him, and live a holy life.”

“It is renewal and sanctification that I receive at the Eucharist. I feel that I am consuming Christ himself.”

“I have nothing in particular to mention.”

CHANNEL:

What are your comments on the format of the eucharistic service?

Three respondents stated that they were not in the habit of using the prayer book during the worship, as they did not find it necessary. One confessed his unfamiliarity with *The Book of Common Worship (BCW)*. Two of the respondents preferred personal devotions during the worship to following the prayer book; one found the Liturgy a barrier to concentration. Others thought the liturgy was helpful and satisfactory. But one would like to have more periods of silence, especially before Confession, and the Prayer of Humble Access. One said that more responsive prayers in the fashion of the Intercessory Prayer were necessary in the liturgy and felt that the Prayer of Thanksgiving was too short. All found music and singing helpful contributing to the atmosphere of worship. Two people considered the Sermon as the most important part of the liturgy. One mentioned the blessing of the communion elements (i.e. the Words of the Institution) as the central point of the liturgy, while for another the Fraction was the central event. Most of the respondents mentioned the Prayer of Humble Access as their favourite prayer. Another loved the Lord's Prayer best of all. But for one person, the Intercession was the favourite part; he was a systematic intercessor who kept a long list of names of people for intercession.

RECEIVER:***What does the Eucharist mean to you? How do you approach the Eucharist?***

Answers:

“The Eucharist is a holy sacrament symbolising a renewed relationship between God and his people. It commemorates the death and resurrection of Christ. It reminds one of the need to keep alive one’s personal relationship with Christ.”

“The Eucharist is a holy sacrament celebrated in obedience to the Lord’s command. It has a two-fold dimension of fellowship with God and with fellow-believers.”

One stated that his enthusiasm for the Eucharist developed following his physical healing and conversion six years ago. One shared that he usually received communion when he was bogged down with anxieties and worries. The communion experience had always instilled strength and hope in him. He said, “Whenever I pray sincerely, I see a golden light and I am assured that God is listening.”

Most of the respondents emphasized the need for personal preparation; one mentioned it was necessary on the part of the worship leaders as well as the congregation in order that the Eucharist might be effective. Personal preparation included self-examination, confession of sins, prayer, and rejection of wrong thoughts and attitudes. One mentioned the importance of having a ‘pious spirit and an abhorrence of sin’. To an educated young man “total surrender, believers’ baptism, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are prerequisites” of taking part in the Eucharist. But he confessed that since he fell short of these he has been staying away from the Eucharist. One stated the need to forgive one’s enemies and another the need to give up all kinds of malice and ill will as obligatory for a communicant. Two people were in the habit of fasting before communion on Sundays. One respondent’s personal preparation included physical cleanliness. But one person said that never prepared himself in any special manner for the Eucharist; neither would he approach the Eucharist with any particular expectation.

EFFECT:

What is the impact of the Eucharist on your life, on your congregation, and on the society at large?

One respondent was not sure of any impact at all. Another stated that participation in the Eucharist helped him to get on well with others. Another person experienced peace and the resolution of his personal problems. One person mentioned that the sustained intercession of the church on behalf of the world was effective. Others pointed out that in the context of a mixed congregation like St George's where different social and economic classes, castes and languages were represented the Eucharist was a means of social integration. One person belonging to the middle class admitted that unrelenting social prejudices largely confined the unifying influence of the Eucharist to Sundays and to the four walls of the church but he wanted to see the social barriers overcome.

D. The Eucharist and the people: Responses from CSI Thalap, North Kerala Diocese

Among the eleven people interviewed, nine were men and two were women. Three were Dalit Christians. One was a youth below the age of thirty. Eight had university education. Three were members of the parish committee or 'church elders.' One was a non-communicant churchgoer.

CONTEXT:

Are you satisfied with the physical arrangements of the place of worship?

Everyone expressed satisfaction with the physical arrangements of the place of worship. No one had any difficulties. There was no suggestion whatsoever for change.

SOURCE:

Who is the celebrant of the Eucharist?

Answers:

“The presbyter is the celebrant. But the congregation has a vital and irreplaceable role.”

“Christ is the celebrant. The presbyter is the worship leader. The congregation has an important role.”

“The clergy and the congregation together celebrate.”

Four people were of the opinion that the presbyter is the celebrant and the congregation's role was subsidiary. One said that the congregation must participate wholeheartedly and sincerely if the worship was to become meaningful. While emphasizing the importance of the role of the congregation, another insisted that a person who did not have a lively personal relationship with the Lord would not be able to worship him at all.

What are your comments about the degree of participation of the laity?

There was general satisfaction with the present degree of participation. One, an elder of the church, was happy about the role he had taken upon himself to manage the church building and to prepare the church every Sunday for worship. He also reads all the lessons and collects the offertory every Sunday. But then it was noted that no other member of the congregation was being involved in these tasks.

How will you describe the regular communicants of your parish?

The regular communicants belonged to the middle class. It was reported that the regular communicants were within the age range of 35-50. Younger people who may be present at the worship generally as a rule do not receive communion. One person suggested, “They may have the wrong notion that the Eucharist is only for the elderly.”

MESSAGE:

What message did you get at the Eucharist today? What other blessings?

A senior member who was also a heart patient said that he experienced healing and comfort during that Sunday's Eucharist. He said that he had arrived at the church that morning gasping for breath; during the worship he had forgotten his ailment; and after the service he was feeling fine. For him the Eucharist had always been a source of personal renewal.

A husband and wife were united in their opinion. The husband said, "The Eucharist is a source of spiritual experience for us. We feel very close to God and feel confident that God forgives our sins." Another couple echoed this when they said that they experienced peace and closeness to God at the Eucharist. Another person also said that at the Eucharist he felt he was walking closer with God. Another said that for him the Eucharist was a source of peace. Yet another said that he received answers to prayer at the Eucharist.

What are your comments on the format of the eucharistic service?

A couple said that they do not usually use the prayer book during the service. But others said that they were in the habit of following the service with the help of the prayer book. One person said that he found the *The Book of Common Worship* (BCW) "quite useful." He felt that the book allowed sufficient freedom for worship. He did not have any problem with the language of the BCW. Another appreciated the "decorum, beauty and clarity" of the BCW order of the Eucharist which also promoted a sense of fellowship among the worshippers.

Many emphasized the importance of music in worship. The ex-Basel Mission has a tradition of good congregational singing. One pointed out the meaningful and touching vocabulary of the Basel Mission hymnbook. A young respondent suggested that in addition to the usual hymns, modern Christian songs should become part of the church's worship in order to make it more meaningful to young people.

Various prayers were named as the most favourite prayer in the liturgy, namely, The Prayer for the Presence ("Be present, be present..."), the Prayer of Humble Access, the Sermon, the Intercession, and the Words of Institution.

RECEIVER:

What does the Eucharist mean to you? How do you approach the Eucharist?

One said that he felt refreshed and renewed after participating in the Eucharist; it was a healing experience for him. Another also said that he found the Eucharist an experience of personal renewal. One confessed that it was only after his marriage that he became a keen Christian. His wife had encouraged him to attend the church and to participate regularly in

the Eucharist. Now they were having regular family prayers and an active personal prayer pattern. Most of the other respondents were regular communicants. But one of them, an elderly person, confessed that he did not have any expectations regarding the personal benefits of the Eucharist. He was aware that for many participants in the Eucharist have received answers to their prayers. But he said he did not have any problem or particular need to pray for.

All emphasized the need for personal preparation. One couple mentioned that they prepared themselves for the Eucharist in personal prayer. The wife always fasted before the Eucharist. Another mentioned his preparation for the Eucharist involved praying for his enemies and wishing them no ill. For another person, personal preparation at home involved confessing his sins to God and finding reconciliation with God; he could then concentrate his thoughts on his relationship with God during the service.

EFFECT:

What is the impact of the Eucharist on your life, on your congregation, and on the society at large?

Two people particularly mentioned the benefit of personal renewal. A couple mentioned the influence of the Eucharist in terms of the existence of “peace and harmony in the family and a sense of fellowship within the congregation.” Another verbalized the experience as a means of communion with God.

As for the impact on the congregation, one respondent felt sad that people did not stay back to talk with one another after the Eucharist; according to him they were not unfriendly but they were unaware of its importance. One person pointed out that the people living in the neighbourhood of the church have expressed their respectful appreciation for the CSI pattern of worship mainly on account of its orderliness. Another said that the Eucharist was able to bring unity and a sense of equality within the congregation. A couple also felt that the Eucharist contributed towards the unity of the congregation, which was a means of witness to the larger society. Two other respondents had the same opinion. One was confident that every celebration of the Eucharist challenged the congregation and the society to unity. One person pointed out that the Eucharist was a great social leveller; at the Eucharist every participant, from the company manager to the gardener, enjoyed the same status before God.

He pointed out that the local congregation as a eucharistic community expressed its concern for the society by supporting poor widows in the area with regular monetary help.

The Case of a non-communicant:

One respondent was a regular churchgoer but a non-communicant. He was a private auditor, married and the father of children in their twenties. He said:

“I do not take part in the Eucharist because I consider it a holy ritual in which we sinners do not deserve to take part. I am a regular churchgoer and participant in the eucharistic service; nevertheless I feel that I am unworthy to receive the elements. In fact, since I stand in the Basel Mission tradition, I feel that only senior members of the congregation should take part in the communion. The youth who are carefree and susceptible to all kinds of temptations must not be encouraged to take part.

“I wholeheartedly participate in worship and enjoy singing the hymns. But the best part of the church service I like is the sermon.

“For Christians, right relationship with the neighbour is very important. The Eucharist is a unique ritual in which the estate staff and the ordinary labourer kneel at the same altar.

“Since I am not in the habit of receiving communion, neither my wife, nor my son, nor my daughter receive communion; but they are also regular church-goers.”

Note: Conclusions drawn from this study are found in Chapter 2, sec.2.3.5.4.

Appendix C

GUIDELINES FOR INTRODUCING PEOPLE'S EUCHARIST IN THE CSI DIOCESES OF KERALA

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Designing an order of the People's Eucharist
3. A scheme for the implementation of the People's Eucharist in the Kerala dioceses
4. The role of worship resources centres
5. Worship resources
6. The roles of participants and facilitators
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8. Guidance for storytelling
9. Guidance concerning the use of Forum Theatre
10. Physical arrangements of the place of worship
11. Frequency of the People's Eucharist
12. Evaluation and follow-up
13. Conclusion

1. Introduction

This section deals with the practical aspects of introducing the People's Eucharist in the Kerala dioceses. This involves creating awareness and interest in the new format of the liturgy, helping the congregations and the dioceses to experiment with it in order to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, assisting them to adopt the format if they find it worthwhile, and enabling them to handle difficulties after adopting the new liturgy into the practice of the church.

Its express purpose is to encourage popular participation in worship, to enable the congregations to come to grips with the real challenge of the good news of the Kingdom of God, and to help the church to be transformed into serving, witnessing community. It is hoped that this format will soon become popular among the CSI Kerala dioceses and will be used along with the present CSI orders of the Eucharist. People's Eucharist will be able to attract interest, because it is the first serious attempt to revise the CSI liturgy after a gap of many years and because it is based on a secular methodology (of People's Theatre). The fact that People's Eucharist allows the whole congregation to take active part in the planning and conduct of the worship must also create interest. It means that ordinary, people, the learned and the not-so-learned, the Dalits and the tribals will be reflecting on theological issues in the light of the Word of God. People's Eucharist is a way of doing theology, as it encourages the laity to interpret the Word of God in relation to their needs, their problems and their struggles. People also may evince interest on account of its flexibility and adaptability. Its educational and dramatic qualities could be of interest to the young and the old.

2. Designing an order of People's Eucharist

The local congregations may choose from the model liturgies prepared by the state and diocesan worship resource centres or they may design their own orders of service with guidance from these centres. While giving shape to the new order of the Eucharist, it is necessary to keep in mind the rules set down by *The Constitution of the Church of South India* regarding the obligatory nine elements of Communion Service. They are the following (as mentioned elsewhere):¹

- i. Introductory prayers,
- ii. The Ministry of the Word,
- iii. The Preparation of the Communicants (Confession, Absolution, etc.),
- iv. The Offertory,
- v. The Thanksgiving, including the Words of Institution, setting apart of the communion (It is suggested that this section should begin with the *Sursum Corda* and the *Sanctus*),
- vi. An Intercession for the whole Church,
- vii. The Lord's Prayer,
- viii. The Administration of the Communion,
- ix. A Thanksgiving and self-dedication.

(The Creeds are optional).²

The worship teams in the local parishes will be able to plan these services with the help of the clergy or other trained leaders.

3. A scheme for the implementation of the People's Eucharist in the Kerala dioceses

The People's Eucharist may be implemented in the Kerala dioceses enlisting the co-operation of the dioceses and the parishes. This scheme of implementation involves the following stages:

i. Building liturgical awareness

This stage involves the publishing of articles and booklets to build general awareness of the need for liturgical renewal and to introduce the People's Eucharist as a viable alternative for the Kerala dioceses of the CSI; this awareness campaign is intended to reach the clergy and the laity at the parish levels. This effort has to go synchronically with the development of the basic infrastructure for the implementation of the new scheme.

ii. The development of basic infrastructure

This includes the organisation of a worship resource centre at the Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum, preparation of worship resources, hand books, and model liturgies of the People's Eucharist to help the parishes. This also involves enlisting the co-operation and patronage of the Synod Liturgy Committee and the Malayalam Area Liturgy Committee as well as of the diocesan administration.

iii. Deepening liturgical awareness and popular participation

This is to be done by means of seminars and workshops on People's Eucharist at the initiative of the dioceses and parishes. These workshops will be used not only to familiarise people with the People's Eucharist but also to train resource persons at the diocesan and parish levels.

¹ Ch. 2, p. 110, footnote 53.

² See Chapter 10, Rule 2 of *The Constitution of the Church of South India* (Madras: CLS, 1952; reprinted 1963) 60-62.

iii. Adoption of People's Eucharist at parish level

Once the resource persons are trained and handbooks are ready, the new liturgical format may be implemented at the diocesan level. This is done with the small congregations in special focus since they can adopt the People's Eucharist more easily on account of their openness, sense of community, and structural flexibility. People's Eucharist may be celebrated once in three months in the beginning until the parishes and the dioceses are familiar with its procedure and decide to adopt it as their regular liturgical pattern with the support and concurrence of the Synod-, area-, and diocesan committees.

iv. Evaluation and follow up

An evaluation process will be organised by the State Worship Resource Centre at the K.U.T. Seminary, Trivandrum on behalf of the dioceses. This will be done with a view to receiving both positive and negative feedback from the parishes, correcting mistakes, improving methods of popularisation of the new liturgy, and promoting the renewal of the church's worship and mission.

4. The role of Worship Resources Centres

Any innovation that spells change in the church's time-honoured traditions could face resistance unless it is accompanied by conscious efforts to inform and educate the people about its advantages. Therefore it is incumbent on the innovators to draw up a systematic procedure to familiarise its beneficiaries with the advantages of the innovation.

This involves preparing the minds of people at the diocesan and the congregational levels. A major prerequisite for the proper conduct of People's Eucharist at parish level is the availability of well-trained resource persons. They may be trained at a central liturgical resource centre in the state attached to the church's theological institution. In addition, there is the need to set up worship resources centres at the diocesan levels. These centres may be assigned the task of preparing liturgical materials, and of conducting liturgical workshops and seminars to train worship teams and performing groups. . It is necessary to train resource persons at local levels and to conduct a series of orientation workshops for ministers and the laity. It is necessary to plan for the year and for the liturgical seasons.

It will be necessary for the dioceses to have a policy statement, clear guidelines and instructions to help worship leaders and members. These should enable them to conduct worship services that foster the warmth, liveliness, dignity, discipline, punctuality, and other qualities of Christian worship.

5. Worship resources

There is the need for resource materials in the form of written material in the form of manuals and workbooks, audio-visual aids, model liturgies

The narrative and other artistic skills of the congregation may be used to their best advantage in the context of People's Eucharist. The pattern of the People's Theatre, which makes use of the natural skills and available resources of people, comes handy here. Therefore, storytelling skills, poetical aptitudes, dramatic and musical talents are all put to use in worship.

In introducing the use of drama and other performing arts in worship, it is necessary to educate people in the importance of body movements and in the use of sound and silence in worship. The purpose of People's Eucharist is to make worship a full-bodied, full-throated praise to God.

Worship has to become a wholesome and totally absorbing artistic and cultural experience. Speech, dialogue, song, music, silence, gestures, postures, movement, etc. have their place in worship. A large variety of performing arts, namely drama, mime, dance, puppetry and so on could be used profitably to highlight the narratives. Costumes, masks, etc. have their uses. Moreover graphics, and audio-visuals, could be generously used. People's Eucharist would hopefully contribute towards the development of new artistic skills for use in the service of the Kingdom and for the glory of God.

6. The roles of the participants and the facilitators

The purpose of the People's Eucharist is to bring glory to God through the mobilisation of God's people to play their role as witnesses of God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ. People's Eucharist is worship planned and organised and conducted by the people. Individual members of the congregation play an active role in it. People's participation is

not only vital but also inevitable³. Care must be taken to see that every member of the congregation participates wholeheartedly in this form of the liturgy. The participation of women, youth, children, and the weaker sections of the congregation, e.g. Dalits, tribals, the elderly, the disabled, etc. has to be assured. The whole event of the dramatic worship is planned sufficiently early by groups of people so that everyone knows about the aim of the worship as well as the part he or she has to play. Although each part of the service is carefully timed and choreographed, the liturgy must allow and provide for free and extempore participation by members

As mentioned earlier the minister functions as a facilitator rendering his patronage and leadership to the laity in general and to the worship team in particular. He guides, plans and organises the worship and encourages everyone to participate. He also guards the decorum and order of the place of worship and, of course, watches the time. He or she also has the concern to see that the act of worship achieves its purpose.

i. Worship committee and special task groups

The congregation should appoint a worship committee, which will function under the parish committee and will have responsibilities for planning and overseeing the worship of the congregation. The minister will be ex-officio chairman of the worship committee. A number of task groups can function under the worship committee. The task groups may be appointed from among the members of the congregation giving maximum representation and participation to all sections of the congregation. The minister will be an ex-officio member of all these teams.

These groups may be entrusted with the following responsibilities: Leading worship, giving Biblical expositions, singing and music (the choir), personal narratives, dramatic episodes, intercession, physical arrangements for worship, etc. Of these the worship leadership teams are the most important ones. There must be not less than five worship leadership teams, which alternately take leadership every week in co-ordinating all the task groups connected with worship. The different worship leadership teams must work together and help one another in the conduct of worship

³ Killinger emphasises the active participation of the people in worship. He says, "What we must ultimately consider in the church are ways of personalising worship, of involving worshippers in more than a spectacle-spectator relationship." *Leave it to the Spirit: Commitment and Freedom in the New Liturgy* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1971) 92.

ii. Worship leadership teams:

The worship leadership team may exercise leadership at the liturgical celebrations and take the necessary initiatives for its planning and preparation much ahead of the celebration. Since there will be a number of worship leadership teams, there will be sufficient time for each team to prepare well. It is desirable that the minister serves as an ex-officio member of all these teams so that the teams will be able to benefit from his knowledge, expertise, and leadership. In addition to the minister, the worship teams may include other theologically trained people, musicians, actors or directors and others with artistic talents. When planning it is necessary to see that all parts of the liturgy are in line with the specified theme for the particular Sunday or occasion on which the Eucharist takes place.

7. The stories of the people

The People's Eucharist will hopefully bring into the arena of worship narratives from human experience, so that it may be liberated and transformed by the saving power of God in Christ. It will comprise themes from religious experiences, testimonies of conversion experience, stories of pain, suffering and torture (as well as liberation from such situations, healing and restoration); poverty, unemployment, financial loss, debt, exploitation, oppression, religious persecution, violence, abuse, disease, mental illness, disabilities, old age, natural catastrophes, relations between the Church and its neighbours, ethical dilemmas, environmental issues, political pressure, media-related issues, personal bad habits, alcoholism, drug abuse, family problems, marital infidelity, generation gap, fear of death, grief, bereavement, etc.

People's Eucharist may use stories, poetry, music, drama, and other performing arts in the narration of the salvation story as well as in the sharing of people's stories. Among these drama has a pride of place. Drama is already there in the present liturgical worship in the CSI just as in the worship of other churches. The liturgy itself may be compared to a drama 'script.'⁴ Mostly church buildings are shaped like proscenium theatres with clearly defined spaces for the 'actors' and the 'audience'. Therefore by bringing drama into worship, one is not introducing anything totally strange to the practice of the church.

⁴ John Killinger quotes Jean Genet, the French genius of the theatre who "remarked in his *The Thief's Journal* that the Mass is the most dramatic form in all of Western History and culture". See *Leave it to the Spirit*, 8.

8. Guidance for storytelling

The worship committee and the worship leadership teams have vital roles to play in selecting and designing the narratives to be used in the worship. The aim and purpose of the narrative session must be clear to all. The narratives concern situations in human predicament, which are juxtaposed with the story of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. The aim is to discover how the divine narrative throws light on the human story and vice versa.

The purpose of storytelling is to bring glory to God and to minister to the worshipping congregation. It is desirable to give preliminary instructions to the congregation on the right ways of storytelling and of listening to stories. The worship team must exercise control over the narration of stories in the interests of time-keeping, propriety and decorum. Each story must be told within, say, ten to twelve minutes. It must have a direct relation to the general theme of the service or such a relationship has to be established. The storytelling sessions cannot cover the whole gamut of human experience and therefore should not be confused with some sort of cathartic sessions or 'sensitivity groups' used by psychologists.

Storytelling must be considered as a serious activity central to the worship. Certain etiquette and a spirit of Christian charity must rule the process. In storytelling, it is important to recognise and respect the limits of storytelling in view of the health and well being of the congregation. In many congregations, members belong to two or three factions; it is common for one faction to be critical about whatever the other faction says or does. In such situations care must be taken to see that controversial topics are not be presented in the guise of narratives.

Fictional stories may be announced as such; the narrator should indicate at the outset of the narration whether his or her story is true or imagined. It goes without saying that the stories must not offend or wound the feelings of the rest of the congregation, neither should the names of those who are not present be mentioned in a critical or offensive manner in order to disconcert them. The storyteller(s) cannot afford to be impolite, disrespectful, jealous, venomous, angry, violent, or foul-mouthed. The narrators must respect the sentiments of the listeners and avoid unsavoury details in the stories. Blatant examples of shocking and demeaning behaviour must be avoided.

Proper listening to the stories is more important than telling them. The group should receive the stories, as well as the biblical expositions in a good spirit, without judgement. After each narration, the congregation may keep silence for a few minutes to allow the story to sink in. It could also be considered as a sign of accepting the story. Afterwards, the listeners may ask questions of clarification, or make comments, or say other words of encouragement. It may be also necessary to make verbal or non-verbal gestures to comfort or encourage the narrator.

9. Guidance concerning the use of the Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is a pedagogical theatre technique devised by Augusto Boal who explains that “it is pedagogical in the sense that we all learn together, actors and the audience.”⁵ It is a means of achieving an objective understanding of situations of oppression in the society. Forum Theatre is based on the idea that the victim of an oppression can change his or her situation, defeat the oppressor and liberate himself or herself if he or she really wants. Members of the audience in the role of “spect-actors” take up the role of the victim of the oppression and experiment with various solutions to the problem until a satisfactory solution to the problem emerges. The purpose of this exercise is to enable the audience to face their own oppressive situations with courage and to devise various means to counter them. One precondition for the Forum Theatre is that the story must be simple and straightforward in which the protagonist could be easily identified.

There are three kinds of participants in the Forum Theatre: one, the *actors* who present the “anti-model;” two, the “*spect-actors*,” and, three, the “*Joker*.” The “Joker” is practically the producer of the forum theatre. He or she explains the rules to the audience, encourages participation, maintains order, keeps the time and guides the action that follows. Every one has to comply strictly with the instructions of the “Joker.”

In the Forum Theatre every member of the audience plays an active role. He or she is not a mere spectator or a passive witness to the theatre but a “spect-actor,” namely, one who must take up the opportunity to be the protagonist of the play. Therefore first of all, the ‘anti-model’ is presented. This has to be a well-constructed and convincing dramatic episode

⁵ Boal, *Games*, 19. See also above Ch. 3, sec. 3.4.4.3.

based on a real-issue or problem. It is intended to highlight a specific instance of oppression, or exploitation.⁶

The members of the audience watch the “anti-model” carefully and identify its protagonist (main character) who is the victim of oppression. They take note of the manner in which the protagonist fails in solving his or her problems. The audience must contemplate the possibilities available for the protagonist to solve the problem of oppression. These are briefly discussed after the first performance of the play (the “anti-model”).

The play is presented for a second time. The members of the audience take up their role as “spect-actors”. Anyone among the spect-actors who has an idea about solving the protagonist’s problems shows his or her readiness to intervene by shouting the word, “Stop!” The action on the stage freezes at the point where some one has interrupted the action. The person who has interrupted now takes the place of the protagonist in the play. He or she may start the action at an earlier point of the story in order to demonstrate an alternate solution. If the solution he or she has tried out does not prove to be satisfactory either, someone else with a better idea shouts, “Stop!” and replaces the first person. Any number of such replacements of the protagonist may be attempted until the best possible solution to the oppressive situation emerges. The spect-actors must try to be sincere and realistic in their solutions and avoid ‘magical’ solutions to the problem. The purpose of the exercise is to train and prepare the spect-actor to overcome an oppressive situation in which he or she may find herself as a victim.

After the initial oppression is broken, still the action of the Forum Theatre can be carried on by spect-actors who take on the roles of other characters in the play. When the play takes a satisfactory shape, having resolved the oppression, it is re-staged with the participation of the spect-actors.⁷

10. Physical arrangements of the place of worship

Physical arrangements concern the seating of the congregation, ministers, the arrangement of church furniture like the altar, the lectern, and the font, the spaces for performances, and so

⁶ The stories for the anti-model must come from the real experiences or concerns of the participants. The worship committee may organise special storytelling sessions to select such stories.

⁷ Where there are initial difficulties for the presentation of Forum Theatre, the next alternative is to stop with the discussion of the highlighted issue(s) that follow the presentation of the ‘anti-model.’

on. Physical arrangements should be conducive to the participatory nature of the worship. It must be possible for everyone to be seen and heard.

The sanctuary should provide a warm and comfortable atmosphere where people can spend long hours without discomfort. Seating arrangements should be flexible enough to allow different patterns – circular, semi-circular, small-group arrangements, etc. They must also allow the possibility of sitting on the floor. Chairs, rather than pews, allow variations in seating arrangements. A circular or semicircular arrangement of seats with a centralised area for the Lord's table and the pulpit (and the font) is the ideal. Because of its narrative character the circle is the preferred shape of the gathering for People's Eucharist.⁸ It gives everyone equal opportunity to participate and does not allow domination by any one. The congregation could be seated in one circle around the Lord's table. One large group has its place but it must be possible to divide the congregation into small, face-to-face groups whenever necessary.

All the other pieces of furniture, including the holy table, font, lectern, and pulpit, should be moveable; the holy table may stand in a central position with the congregation seated on its three sides or all around.

11. Frequency of the People's Eucharist

Initially People's Eucharist may be conducted in a congregation once in three months. This is mainly in view of the time required for preparation, especially at the early stages. Later on as a practical scheme for the proper planning of worship will have evolved in accordance with local conditions, more frequent celebrations may be possible. This will allow time for two things: firstly, for people to familiarise themselves with the liturgy and to assess its merits and demerits for their particular congregation; and, secondly, for finding resources and resource persons in the parish. Prayerful planning and careful preparation are absolutely necessary for a proper celebration of the People's Eucharist. It is essential to have practice sessions or rehearsals of the whole liturgy, especially at the early stage. Dramatic episodes and other artistic presentations will require several meetings for practice before the actual worship takes place. Members of the congregation have to be actively involved at every stage of the planning and celebration of the People's Eucharist.

⁸ Why circle? According to Richard Southern, "the circle is the natural shape that an audience takes up when it assembles round an open space to watch the action of a group of players." (See *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*, London: Faber and Faber, 1973, p. 57).

12. Evaluation and follow-up

It is necessary to have a team of people will be responsible for the recording of feedback or responses from the congregation, both positive and negative. These responses should enable proper evaluation of the worship. Each evaluation report must be taken into account when planning the next celebration of the Eucharist.

13. Conclusion

Prayerful planning, careful preparation and imaginative leadership are absolutely necessary for the implementation of People's Eucharist at the diocesan and congregational levels. Assuredly, as the lay people gradually become confident enough to exercise their spiritual gifts fully in the worship of the church and to use their skills to bring glory to God, the quality of worship in the local congregations will undergo positive change. There will be a new appreciation of the working of the Holy Spirit in the church as well as in the wider society. There will be transformation in personal lives and in personal relationships. Moreover the worshippers will derive new confidence to practise their faith in their several callings in the society.

Appendix D

PEOPLE'S EUCHARIST: MODEL 3¹

Theme: "Violence against Children"

This order of the Lord's Supper centres on God's special concern for children and God's anger on those who offend them. The Bible instructs the people of God to guide, discipline and bring up children in the knowledge and wisdom of God (e.g. Deut. 6:1-9; Ps. 119: 9-16; Prov. 3:11-12). God's concern for children was seen particularly in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus commended the humility of children and described it as the quality of the greatest in the Kingdom of God (Mt. 18:4). Jesus said that God's kingdom belonged to those who received it just like children (Mk. 10:14-15 pars.). Those who are considerate to little children and care for them render service to Jesus himself (Mt. 18:5). On the other hand it is a great crime indeed to despise or harm children (Mt. 18:14).

Social and political systems that neglect the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children and those who condone abuse and the violence on children are rebelling against the will of God and the values of his Kingdom. The church has a duty to be on the against the injustices that are being perpetrated against children in the society. It must fight social policies and cultural patterns that are opposed to God's will for children and their wholesome development. The church must care for the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being of children. The worshipping community must dedicate its energy to the care, wholesome development, training and emancipation of children.

This is also a liturgy of the laity, which can be celebrated only with lay participation. There is scope for participation in the prayers and in the Creed. Lay leadership is of course essential in the presentation of the stories of the people and in the exposition and the application of the Scriptures to daily life.

The Eucharist has a narrative format, which is seen in God's work of salvation, which unfolds in the pages of the Bible in the actual stories of individuals and peoples. New episodes of God's story take shape in the lives of people who respond to God's redemptive love in Christ; this happens when they yield their lives to join in the liberating mission of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist is a record of these stories.

The Eucharistic Prayer in this liturgy is taken from ecumenical sources. As part of the Offertory, there is a symbolic act of self-dedication. The Peace follows the receiving of the communion and is intended to be the fruit of the fellowship around the Lord's Table of the church for its mission in the world.

The "stories of the people" precede the Scripture readings. There are two ways of using them. One choice is to use just one of the episodes as a Forum Theatre piece. The second choice is to use all the three episodes as a basis for later "reflections" or discussions seeking to arrive at a new understanding of the issues. It should also throw light on the task of the church in this area.

An Order of the Lord's Supper

Theme: **"Violence against Children"**

Preliminaries: Welcome, announcements, etc.

THE PREPARATION

Hymn

P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Confession

P: Let us kneel and spend a few moments examining ourselves. Let us confess our sins to the almighty God.

Silence

Lord, you surround us with your blessings. Take away everything that prevents us from following you. We confess our failures and our revolt against your will.

¹ In April 1999, a shorter version of this liturgy was used at a New College communion service enlisting wide participation of the congregation. The service drew an appreciative response.

Voice 1: You asked for my hands that you might use them for your purpose. I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

Voice 2: You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice. I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

Voice 3: You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty. I closed them for I did not want to see.

Voice 4: You asked for my life that you might work through me. I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

Voice 5: Lord, forgive me for my calculated efforts to serve you only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so.²

Voice 6: Father, forgive us, renew us, and send us out as usable instruments of your Kingdom that we might take seriously the meaning of the cross of Christ. In his name we pray. **Amen.**

Silence

P1: God, the kindest ear in the world, hears us. God, the loving heart of the Word, pardons us.

P2: From Jesus of Nazareth we have learned that God wants to free people from the bondage of guilt and fear.

P3: Therefore Jesus says to the despised man collecting taxes: Your sin is forgiven.

P4: Therefore Jesus says to the woman with a ruined reputation: Your sin is forgiven. Amen, yes, so be it!³

C: *Amen. Thank you, Lord.*

Hymn

² Joe Seremane (South Africa), in *Lifelines: Words and Pictures for Prayer and Reflection*, London: Christian Aid, n.d.

³ Declaration of Pardon taken from Kurt Ross and Wolfgang Teichmann, "A Mass for Our Time," *Eucharistic Worship*, 116.

Stories of the People

P: Today we focus on the plight of children in difficult situations around the world. Let us listen carefully as God speaks to us through his Word and through human experiences.

(The following episodes may be acted out wherever possible. The effect of the presentation could be enhanced by the use of posters, photographs or audiovisuals, costumes, and stage props)

Narrator: Imagine a carpet weaver's shed in Nadini, a remote village in North India. In the low-ceilinged dingy room cluttered with looms, you find MOHAN working on a carpet loom under the cruel eyes of Mrinal Singh, the supervisor. Mohan is only 8 years old and he has just started his 12 hour-long working day. He is not a rare breed but just one of India's 77 million working children.

Mohan: (He has cut his finger with the carpet knife) Ouch!

Singh: (Angrily) Idiot! Have you cut yourself? You ought to be slapped. Don't mess up the carpet with your contaminated blood. Where are the matches? Show me your finger. I will burn the wound with this flame. It will stop the bleeding. There you are. Keep on working! These matches cost money too. A matchbox costs a tenth of your daily wage. Do you hear? What are you crying for?

Mohan: I want to go home.

Singh: You want to go home? That's a joke. If you go home who will pay me all the money I have advanced? You are not going anywhere for another five years until you have slaved for every *paisa* I have lent to your no-good father. Shut up and go back to work, you dithering young fool!

Narrator: Imagine a street scene in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. An empty taxicab pulls up and a twelve-year-old girl runs up to the car. She is REGINA, one of the thousands of homeless children in the city.

Regina: Shall I wash the windows?

Driver: Is that all?

Regina: Give me three *reals* and I will wash the car. Please. I haven't eaten anything today.

Driver: Do you care for some easy cash?

Regina: I want money only for the work I do.

Driver: Get into the car and I will take you somewhere and they will buy you a good dinner.

Regina: No. I don't want it. The other day they almost killed my friend Gloria. She was crying for two days.

Driver: O come on. Be a good girl!

Regina: Don't touch me. I will slash your throat!

Driver: You little puppy! Where did you get the knife? Nonsense! You almost cut my hand. Such cheek! Don't be such a prude. You children are no better than street dogs. Born to live and die on the streets! You are good for nothing. Beggars, bootleggers, drug addicts, and streetwalkers. That is what you are. Now out of the way! Let's see if there's someone else.

Narrator: Next let us go to the war-torn Balkans. This is a home for the disabled in Skopje, the Macedonian capital. Almost all the children here are from Kosovo. They are children who have lost their parents in the war. We have a hundred of them here. This is Elsa, no, MARIA. She is quite sick. Eight years old, but so small for her age, isn't she?

A: Hi, Maria! (Maria does not respond. To the Narrator) What's her problem?

N: It seems that both her parents and her brother were slaughtered and hacked to pieces before her very eyes. She was brought here in a state of shock. She used to get seizures several times a day. Then later it was diagnosed that her brain was damaged. She is what you'd call a *vegetable*!

A: She has got such a sweet face, hasn't she? Does she mix with other children?

N: No. Both her legs are paralysed. She cannot move about. She always keeps to the room.

A: (warmly) Hi, Maria? How are you, dear?

N: See, she doesn't understand anything. I have never heard her talk. Let's move on. There are other children here....

A: But she is moving her lips. She is trying to say something....

N: Elsa, no, Maria, what is it?

Maria: (addresses A., whom she has been watching, and stammers) I - love - you – *Mama!*

Silence

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you

P: Let us pray:

Collect

Heavenly Father, your Word clearly instructs us to bring up children in the way of the Lord. Lord, fill all children with your knowledge and wisdom. May they grow up in divine and human favour as your Son Jesus Christ grew up in Nazareth. O Christ, bless all children today, as you blessed the children who put their trust in you and cheerfully received your Kingdom. O Holy Spirit, guide and strengthen those who teach the young and those who care for sick and delinquent children. May your Church constantly strive to bring freedom and the knowledge of your salvation to every child. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Different members of the congregation may read one or more of the following lessons. A candle/ lamp is lit before the reading of the Lessons.

Old Testament: Deut. 6:1-9

Psalms. 119:9-16

Epistle: Eph. 6:1-4

The Gospel: Mt. 18:1-6, 10-14

P: (After the third lesson) This is the Word of God.

C: *Amen. Thanks be to God.*

The presbyter or a lay person will give a brief exposition of the Lessons to highlight the major themes in the lessons and to take note of the questions they raise particularly with reference to the sad plight and distress of a large numbers of children in the society.

Silence

Reflections (*The worshippers share the fruits of their reflections on the Word of God and on the issues highlighted by the dramatic episodes*).

Hymn (preferably sung by a group of children)

The Creed

The Nicene Creed *or the following confession of faith may be used*:

P: God speaks to us in his Word and in the stories of his people. Let us respond by affirming our faith. (*Let us stand*):

We believe that God is Father and he cares with special affection for the suffering, the little ones, the migrants, the poor, the exploited.

C: *We believe, Lord, but come and increase our faith.*

P: We believe that Jesus came to announce the good news to the poor, to give sight to the blind and to set free those who are ill-treated.

C: *We believe, Lord, but come and increase our faith.*

P: We believe that the Holy Spirit reveals his love to little ones and gives us strength to struggle side by side with those who struggle to form a fraternal world in accordance with the will of the Father.

C: *We believe Lord, but come and increase our faith. Amen.*⁴

Intercession

Intercession: The following litany may be used. Additional prayers or biddings including specific requests mentioning names of people in need may be included. Alternatively, the presbyter may call upon two or three participants to pray in their own words.

P: Let us bring to God our needs and the needs of others. Let us pray:

Leader 1: God, your kind Spirit lives and works in all things and beings, in all becoming and happenings. We lift up before you our thoughts, our sorrows, and our hopes for our world and we ask your help to be reconciled to one another and to find life in the midst of death, and hope in despair.

C: *Lord, look upon our need.*

⁴ Creed adapted from "Regional Expressions of the Lima Liturgy: Latin America," *ibid.*, 73.

Leader 2: Father, there are children and young people in regions of war and crisis. There are suffering children among us too: orphans, addicts, school dropouts, refugee children, abused children, enslaved children, and many others who need material and spiritual caring. Give us courage to help them and to cry to God constantly on their behalf.

C: *Lord, look upon our need.*⁵

Leader 3: O God, you are filled with tender love for those who live in fear – bless all children who live in fear; afraid of someone at home; afraid of someone at school; afraid of someone who has treated them wrongly. Give all those children the wisdom they need to know whom they can trust, so that their fears can be heard, and justice and truth prevail. And then bring to their wounded minds and souls the healing of your peace.⁶

C: *Lord, look upon our need.*

Leader 4: O God, Sustainer and Protector of the weak, we pray for children who are illegally employed in difficult and dangerous occupations, whose lives are spent in gloomy and unhealthy surroundings. We pray also for those who fight for their liberation and rehabilitation. Strengthen your church to make the world a better and safer place where children may grow up without fear and the poor and the oppressed may find freedom and fullness of life. In Jesus' name.

C: *Lord, look upon our need. Amen.*

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

All: *Be present, Be present, O Jesus, our good High Priest, as you were in the midst of your disciples, and make yourself known to us in the breaking of the bread. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Hymn (*The Offertory*)

P: *I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2)*

⁵ Adapted from "A Mass for Our Time," *ibid.*, 118-119.

⁶ Christopher Herbert, *'Prayers for Children'* (London: National Society/ Church House Publishing, 1985) 5.

With these offerings, let us offer to God the tears and pain of all those who suffer around the world, particularly the suffering of neglected children. With these offerings, let us offer ourselves to God that God may use us in his work of liberation among the oppressed. As we kneel let us dedicate our lives to God who gives himself to us in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Let us pray:

All: *We come to your table, O gracious Father, counting on your goodness and mercy. We do not deserve even the crumbs under your table. Give us grace now to enter into communion with your dear Son Jesus Christ. Cleanse us with the body and blood of Christ, which were given for our salvation. May Christ live in us and we in him as we lay our lives before you. Renew and transform us through your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All engage in a symbolic action to represent the self-dedication of the worshippers as appropriate (e.g. the lighting of candles/ lamps, offering of flowers, or of other symbolic objects, representing one's life, work, special gifts, special concerns, etc. are meaningful)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: *We lift them up to the Lord.*

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

P: ⁷It is good and right, always and everywhere to give you thanks, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and everliving God. All your works, the height and the depth, echo the silent music of your praise. So now with all the powers of heaven and earth, we sing the ageless hymn of your glory:

C: *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might,*

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

P: All holy God, how wonderful is the work of your hands! When sin had scarred the world, you entered into a covenant to renew the whole creation. As a mother tenderly

⁷ This eucharistic prayer is a slightly adapted version taken from "Eucharistic Prayers: Ancient and Contemporary: 4. Great Thanksgiving," in *Eucharistic Worship in Ecumenical Contexts*, 152-155.

gathers her children, as a father joyfully welcomes his own, you embraced a people as your own, and filled them with longing for a peace that would last and for a justice that would never fail.

Through countless generations your people hungered for the bread of freedom. From them you raised up Jesus, your Son, the living bread, in whom ancient hungers are satisfied. He healed the sick, though he himself would suffer; he offered life to sinners, though death would hunt him down. But with a love stronger than death, he opened wide his arms and surrendered his spirit....

C: *O Lord, our God, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

P: On the night before he met with death, Jesus came to the table with those he loved. He took bread and praised you, God of all creation. He broke the bread among his disciples and said: Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body, given for you. When the supper was ended, he took a cup of wine, and gave thanks to you, God of all creation. He passed the cup among his disciples and said: Take this, all of you, and drink it. This is the cup of the new covenant sealed in my blood for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

C: *Amen. Your death, O Lord Jesus, we remember, your resurrection we proclaim, your final coming we await. Christ, to you be glory.*

P: Gracious God, we offer you our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we commemorate Jesus, your Son. Death could not bind him, for you raised him up in the Spirit of holiness and exalted him as Lord of creation.

C: *Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.*

P: Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move in power over us and over these earthly gifts of bread and wine, that they may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ, and that we may become one in him.

May his coming in glory find us ever watchful in prayer, strong in truth and love, and faithful in your service. Then, at last, all peoples will be free, all divisions healed, and with your whole creation, we will sing your praise, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen.

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour gave us:

All: *Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

Silence

The Invitation

P1: Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

P2: Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.

P3: Lift up your hearts and minds above your cares and fears and let this bread and wine be to you the token and pledge of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit, all meant for you if you will receive them in humble faith.⁸

The Communion

(After the Communion)

P: Now in Christ Jesus we who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ:

C: *For he is our peace, who has made us one and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.*

P: The peace of the Lord be always with you. Let us exchange a sign of peace.

Worshippers greet one another.

⁸ William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (London: SCM Press, 1967) 119.

P: Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have accepted us as your children in your Son Jesus Christ. You have fed us with his body and blood. We thank you Lord. Direct our minds, so that we do what you want and not what the world wants us to do. Help us to obey you on earth and to rejoice with all your saints in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Spirit, one God, forever.

C: *Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour, power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*

P: The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord's face shine upon us, and give us peace, this day and forever.⁹ *Amen.*

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⁹ Benediction from "Like a Tree Planted by the Rivers of Water," in *Worshipping Ecumenically*, 45.

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